

Notice of Meeting



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Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Thursday 11 September 2025 at 6.30 pm
in Council Chamber Council Offices
Market Street Newbury

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Date of despatch of Agenda: 3 September 2025

For further information about this Agenda, or to inspect any background documents referred to in Part I reports, please contact Gordon Oliver on 01635 519486

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WestBerkshire
C O U N C I L

**Agenda - Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to be held on Thursday 11
September 2025 (continued)**

To: Councillors Dominic Boeck (Chairman), Janine Lewis (Vice-Chairman), Paul Dick, Owen Jeffery, Jane Langford, Alan Macro, Louise Sturgess, Martha Vickers and Clive Taylor. Emily Daly, Catherine Hobbs, and Tony Wilson

Substitutes: Councillors Adrian Abbs, Dennis Benneyworth, Martin Colston, Carolyne Culver, Billy Drummond, Clive Hooker, David Marsh, Matt Shakespeare and Richard Somner

Agenda

Part I		Page No.
1	Apologies for Absence To receive apologies for inability to attend the meeting (if any).	5 - 6
2	Minutes To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 5 June 2025.	7 - 14
3	Actions from previous Minutes To receive an update on recommendations and actions following the previous Committee meeting.	15 - 16
4	Declarations of Interest To remind Members of the need to record the existence and nature of any personal, disclosable pecuniary or other registrable interests in items on the agenda, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct .	17 - 18
5	Petitions Purpose: To consider any petitions requiring an Officer response.	19 - 20
6	Youth Justice Annual Plan Purpose: To present the Youth Justice Annual Plan, which is due to go to Executive for Approval on 25 September 2025.	21 - 80
7	Children's Services Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2024/25 Purpose: To present the Children's Social Care Complaints Annual Report for 2024/25, including feedback from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.	81 - 110



Agenda - Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to be held on Thursday 11 September 2025 (continued)

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|----|--|-----------|
| 8 | Child Protection Annual Report 2024-25
Purpose: To report upon the performance of services for children and young people subject to a child protection plan between 1st April 2024 and 31st March 2025, providing breakdown and commentary regarding the quality of practice within West Berkshire's child protection conference process and to make recommendations for any required remedial action. | 111 - 202 |
| 9 | SEND High Needs Block and Implementation of the SEND Strategy Delivery Plan
Purpose: To provide an update on SEND High Needs Block and the effectiveness of actions set out in the SEND Strategy Delivery Plan. | 203 - 272 |
| 10 | Young Person Co-opted Members
Purpose: To seek feedback on the proposed process for recruiting, appointing, and supporting young people as Co-opted Members of the CYP Scrutiny Committee. | 273 - 290 |
| 11 | Executive Forward Plan 1 September to 31 December 2025
Purpose: To advise the Committee of items due to be considered by West Berkshire Council's Executive, and for Members to decide whether they wish to review any of the proposed items prior to the meeting indicated in the Plan. | 291 - 300 |
| 12 | Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Work Programme
Purpose: To receive new items and agree and prioritise the work programme of the Committee. | 301 - 302 |

Sarah Clarke.

Sarah Clarke
Interim Executive Director - Resources

If you require this information in a different format or translation, please contact Gordon Oliver on telephone (01635) 519486.

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Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee -
11 September 2025

Item 1 – Apologies

Verbal Item

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DRAFT

Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 5 JUNE 2025

Councillors Present: Dominic Boeck, Paul Dick (Chairman), Owen Jeffery, Martha Vickers, Clive Taylor, Billy Drummond (Substitute) (In place of Martin Colston) and Alan Macro (Substitute) (In place of Janine Lewis)

Also Present: Councillor Clive Hooker

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Janine Lewis, Councillor Martin Colston, Councillor Jane Langford and Councillor Louise Sturgess

Officers/Others Present: AnnMarie Dodds (Executive Director – Children's Services), Neil Goddard (Service Director – Education), Dora Gouveia Schofield (Principal Social Worker and Academy Lead), Sonia Harris (Service Manager), Sue O'Brien (Complaints and Access to Records Manager), Melissa Perry (Principal EWO/Lead Officer for Safeguarding), Rebecca Wilshire, and Tony Wilson (Director, Oxford Diocesan Board of Education)

PART I

1 Election of Chairman

Given that neither the Chairman nor the Vice-Chairman were present at the start of the meeting, the Clerk invited nominations from those Members present to act as Chairman for the duration of the meeting. Councillor Billy Drummond proposed Councillor Paul Dick. This was seconded by Councillor Martha Vickers. No other nominations were received. At the vote, the motion was passed, and Councillor Dick assumed the Chair.

The Chairman noted that Tony Wilson and Catherine Hobbs had been nominated as the Church of England and Roman Catholic Diocese representatives on the committee. Although they would not be formally co-opted until the next meeting of Council on 17 July, the Chairman indicated that they would be permitted to speak to any of the Part I items on the agenda.

2 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2025 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3 Recommendations and Actions Tracker

It was noted that previous recommendations to the Executive from the Scrutiny Commission and actions arising from meetings of the Commission had been reallocated to the tracker of each of the new scrutiny committees where relevant.

Members reviewed the actions from the previous meetings. The following points were noted:

- **178** - The performance dashboard had not been included in the latest SEND/Delivering Better Value report – this would be covered in a future report.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received at the meeting.

5 Petitions

There were no petitions to be received at the meeting.

6 LGA Review of Children's Social Care

Sonia Harris, Service Manager, presented the report on the LGA Review of Children's Social Care (Agenda Item 6).

The following points were raised in the debate:

- Members welcomed the many positives highlighted in the LGA review.
- It was noted that the review had identified limited evidence of reflective supervision. Officers explained that all social workers had 1-2-1 supervision, with space provided for reflection. There was limited time for reflection on group case supervision due to the number of children, but meetings were being made more structured to ensure it was included.
- Members asked about areas for improvement identified in the review around early intervention and closer working/communication with partners. Officers confirmed that they were looking at how to involve schools and health colleagues in group case supervision.
- Concern was expressed around practitioner workload. It was acknowledged that while caseloads varied, there was a trend of increasing complexity. Caseloads were constantly reviewed, less experienced staff were being trained to take on more complex cases, and additional staff were employed to meet demand as necessary.
- Officers confirmed that the number of agency staff had reduced over time and accounted for just 15% of social workers employed by the Council.
- Members asked about children not in education. Officers indicated that where they were known, social workers would seek to get children back into education and socialising. It was acknowledged that there were children who had been impacted by Covid who had missed early years education, but agencies were working together to address this. Anyone aware of a child that was missing school was encouraged to report this. The Council was in the process of developing an attendance strategy, which would go out to consultation in September. It was noted that the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill would facilitate monitoring of children not in school.

Action: CYP Scrutiny Committee to be consulted on the draft Attendance Strategy.

- It was confirmed that for the Peer Challenge, the reviewers selected which cases to review.
- Members asked about the Children in Need Pilot. It was explained that alternatively qualified practitioners were supervised by social workers/ managers. The aim was to provide intensive early support to prevent future statutory intervention. Results were positive and an example was provided.
- Officers were asked about the involvement of fathers. It was confirmed that social workers always tried to involve fathers as early as possible. Again, an example was provided.
- It was noted that feedback was always sought from children and families about what had gone well and how things could be done differently. As a result of feedback

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received, changes had been made to how family time sessions were run, and these changes had been well-received.

- Members asked if any students had managed to get degrees through the i-College.

Action: Officers to confirm qualifications gained by i-College students.

- It was suggested that the most challenging actions in response to the LGA review would be around recruitment and retention of staff. It was difficult work and managers needed to listen to and support their teams.
- Officers were asked if senior staff were allocated casework. It was confirmed that the role of managers was to support staff, and they did not generally take on cases themselves, since this would reduce their capacity to provide that support. The exception was adoption work, since staff needed to have a certain level of experience.
- Members acknowledged the fostering campaign that had been run locally and asked if a similar campaign could be run in relation to recruitment of social workers. It was explained that the Council had been successful in recruiting and retaining social workers and reducing reliance on agency staff. Thanks were expressed to the Council's HR service and the Social Work Academy.

RESOLVED to note the report.

7 **Castle Gate Ofsted Report**

Dora Gouveia Schofield (Principal Social Worker and Academy Lead) presented the Castle Gate Ofsted Report (Agenda Item 7).

(Councillor Dominic Boeck joined the meeting during discussion of this item.)

The following points were raised in the debate:

- Officers were congratulated on the 'Outstanding' assessment.
- It was noted that 22 children currently attended Castle Gate and there were seven children on the waiting list.
- It was confirmed that Castle Gate was the only facility providing short break respite care for families in West Berkshire.
- Officers indicated that they were in regular contact with other local authorities to exchange best practice information.

RESOLVED to note the report.

8 **Ofsted and CQC Thematic Review Into Children Who Are Not in School**

Neil Goddard (Service Director - Education and SEND) presented the Ofsted and CQC Thematic Review Into Children Who Are Not in School (Agenda Item 8).

The following points were raised in the debate:

- Members noted that some children were being diagnosed as SEND when all they actually needed was support with school readiness and socialisation. Officers stressed that early intervention was key. Parents were being encouraged to take up their early years entitlement. Lots of work was being done around the transition into primary schools, and work was ongoing with schools to delivery early interventions that kept children in mainstream schools where they would achieve the best outcomes.

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- Members noted that the report appeared to indicate support for parents had decreased over time. It was suggested that support from health visitors and the Family Hubs was key. Officers agreed about the importance of health visitors. Signposting to local services had improved, so parents could find appropriate support. Also, take-up of the early years offer delivered significant benefits. In addition, family hubs were being developed to deliver support to a broader age range of children. The decrease in support mentioned in the report referred to the historic situation, but the focus was now moving back to early intervention, early years and early help.
- Concern was expressed that parents who were not online might not be aware of the local offer, and that more active support may be required. It was confirmed that the local offer was aimed at professionals, so they could alert parents they worked with, as well as through local libraries and family hubs. It was acknowledged that there were still hard to reach families who may not be engaged, but strategies were being put in place to reach them.

Action: Officers to bring an update on the family hubs to a future meeting of the CYP Scrutiny Committee.

- Members noted that the report had flagged concerns about a lack of a clear strategy for alerting professionals across agencies about children not in education. Officers provided assurance that they were working more closely with colleagues in health and social care through the Strategic SEND Board, so the right professionals were informed and involved. Appropriate training and support were also being provided.
- Officers were asked if there were areas of good practice that had not been implemented in West Berkshire. It was acknowledged that the Council could do more around joint commissioning and officers highlighted that an advert was out for a new joint commissioner post.
- Members noted that the report had flagged difficulties experienced by parents in accessing therapy support and asked about the planned system review. Officers explained that existing commissioned therapy services did not make provision for children who were not at school. However, this gap would be addressed as services were recommissioned. Any issues regarding waiting lists would need to be referred to the Integrated Care Board for response.
- Concern was expressed about children not in education who were presenting at the crisis service with acute mental health needs, having not being identified earlier. Officers explained that the Dynamic Support Register was used to identify children at risk of escalating to Tier 4 services and to ensure they received timely support. This was reviewed by a panel of professionals that included representation by colleagues in Education and Children's Social Care and allowed for effective planning across agencies. Members asked to see data related to the register.

Action: Officers to provide data in relation to the Dynamic Support Register.

- In relation to respite care, officers confirmed that there were 22 children using the service, with seven on a waiting list. The numbers who benefited in any given year varied due to the churn amongst service users.
- Members noted that social workers had no authority to intervene where a child had been excluded from school, but where home-schooling was considered inappropriate. Officers explained that parents had a right to elective home education and local authorities had few rights to intervene beyond safeguarding and asking the parent to provide a curriculum. If the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act was passed, this would mandate a register of home-educated children, and local authorities would be

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able to support and challenge parents to ensure that the education provided was appropriate. It was noted that a significant number of children subsequently returned to school because their parents struggled with home-education.

- Officers were asked about what was being done to reduce the number of permanent exclusions. It was confirmed that there had been 48 exclusions already this year compared with a historic average of 8 to 12. Work was being undertaken to prevent exclusions, but more needed to be done. The i-College provided excellent alternative provision, but more short-term turnaround provision was needed.

Action: Officers to bring a report on exclusions to a future meeting of the CYP Scrutiny Committee.

- Officers were praised for how well they worked with primary schools around emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA), but it was recognised that this was more a problem for secondary schools. Officers were asked about the scale of the problem, what was being done to encourage schools to buy into the EBSA service, and whether there were additional challenges in relation to academies. It was confirmed that the service was offered to all, but schools could choose to manage the issue in different ways, and some had good internal processes. It was recognised that there needed to be closer working with schools to ensure the quality of support provided. Officers highlighted challenges with quantifying EBSA, since there was an element of self-diagnosis. The team worked with schools to support young people at risk of EBSA as well as those who were missing school.

Action: Officers to bring a report on attendance to a future meeting of CYP Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED to note the report

9 **Delivering Better Value in SEND Closedown and the Innovation in SEND Delivery Plan**

Neil Goddard (Service Director – Education and SEND) presented the Delivering Better Value (DBV) Closedown Report (Agenda Item 9).

The following points were raised in the debate:

- Members asked for further details of the ‘very significant risks’ that remained in the system. It was explained that need was increasing, and the Council was unable to meet that need as effectively and financially viably as officers would like. Covid legacy was still driving increased demand for SEND, and the Council was heavily reliant on costly independent provision, where quality was variable. There was an aspiration to manage services in-house and to tailor provision to better meet local need and achieve the best possible outcomes for local children.
- It was noted that the Scrutiny Commission had previously had an update on the High Needs Block and there had been a commitment to bring a report back to a future meeting.
- Members asked about the Strategic Direction and noted that some of the proposals in the Action Plan provided a commentary rather than setting out next steps. Officers indicated that Members had already seen the SEND Strategy and the Delivery Plan was intended to sit beneath this. Many of the actions were at the system level rather than being for the Council to deliver. Officers explained that this report was more focused on the DBV programme, but offered to bring a report back, which better linked the action plan to the SEND Strategy.

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- Members asked about how the Delivery Plan would be managed, noting the proposed timescales, and suggested that a future report would be welcomed on how it was progressing. Officers explained that groups had been set up to progress each of the priority areas, but it was acknowledged that some of the timescales were still being firmed up.

Action: Officers to bring a report on the High Needs Block and implementation of the SEND Strategy Delivery Plan to a future meeting.

- Members noted that some issues were more related to health and may need to be considered by the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED to note the progress made through the DBV programme and to endorse the next steps set out in the Action Plan.

10 Executive Forward Plan - May to August 2025

The Committee considered the West Berkshire Forward Plan for the period covering May to August 2025 (Agenda Item 11).

It was noted that the following items were due to be considered by the Executive in September:

- Corporate Parenting Annual Report
- Youth Justice Annual Plan
- Care Leaver Annual Report
- Early Help Response Hub Annual Report

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

11 Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

The Commission considered its work programme (Agenda Item 12).

The following additions and changes were proposed:

- Children not in Education (11 September 2025)
- SEND High Needs Block (11 September 2025)
- Ofsted Children's Social Care Inspection (11 September 2025)
- Process for Appointing Young Person Co-opted Members (11 September 2025)
- Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill (4 December 2025)
- Curriculum and Assessment Review (4 December 2025)
- School Accountability Reform (4 December 2025)
- Impacts of Declining Birth Rates on Local Schools (4 December 2025)
- Prevention, Early Help and Family Hubs (slip to 4 March 2026)
- Permanent Exclusions (4 March 2026)

A potential task and finish group was proposed to look at mobile phone use amongst children and young people. This was a recommendation emerging from the Children's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Task and Finish Group set up by the Health Scrutiny Committee. It was agreed that Task and Finish Groups would be discussed at the next meeting.

Action: Discuss potential Task and Finish Groups at the September meeting.

RESOLVED to note the work programme.

12 LGSCO Recommendations Report

Sue O'Brien (Complaints and Access to Records Manager) presented the LGSCO Recommendation Report (Agenda Item 10).

It was noted that the report had a confidential appendix, which would require the meeting to move to Part II if the committee wished to discuss it.

RESOLVED to note the LGSCO Recommendation report.

13 Exclusion of Press and Public

Councillor Owen Jeffery proposed to move the meeting to Part II to permit discussion of the confidential appendix to Item 10 on the agenda. This was seconded by Councillor Alan Macro. At the vote, the motion was carried.

RESOLVED that members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items as it is likely that there would be disclosure of exempt information of the description contained in Paragraphs 1 and 2 of [Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972](#), as amended by the [Local Government \(Access to Information\)\(Variation\) Order 2006](#). [Section 10 of Part 10 of the Constitution](#) refers.

14 LGSCO Recommendations Report

(Paragraph 1 - Information relating to an individual.)

(Paragraph 2 – Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.)

The Committee considered the exempt appendix to the LGSCO Recommendation Report (Agenda Item 14), which provided details of the action plan developed by West Berkshire Council to address the LGSCO's recommendations.

RESOLVED to note the action plan.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.24 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature

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Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Scrutiny Recommendations and Actions Tracker

The Recommendations and Actions Tracker is a standing item, and documents the progress of formal scrutiny recommendations and suggested actions for improvement made by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee at its public meetings. Items will remain on the tracker until a response has been provided to the Committee by the Executive, council departments, and/or external partners.

Formal Recommendations to Executive

Ref	Meeting date and agenda item	Scrutiny recommendation	Lead	Target date	Last update	Response	Status

Formal Recommendations to External Partners

Ref	Meeting date and agenda item	Scrutiny recommendation	Lead	Target date	Last update	Response	Status

Suggested Actions for Improvement to Council Departments/Partners

Ref	Meeting date and agenda item	Action	Lead	Target date	Last update	Update	Status
214	26 November 2024: Early Intervention and Family Help	Timetable a future scrutiny review of youth services.	Dave Wraight	Sep-25	Aug-25	To be considered by the CYP Scrutiny Committee when determining its future work programme.	Complete
215		Timetable a future scrutiny review of wraparound care	Neil Goddard	Sep-25	Aug-25	Youth work will be explored under the family hubs as there are limited youth services and limited funding, but will explore in family hub development .	In progress
25-1	5 June 2025: LGA Review of Children's Social Care	CYP Scrutiny Committee to be consulted on the draft Attendance Strategy.	Neil Goddard	Sep-25	Aug-25	CYP Scrutiny committee will be conuslteed as part of the process of agreeing the new strategy.	In progress
25-2	5 June 2025: LGA Review of Children's Social Care	Officers to confirm qualifications gained by i-College students	Neil Goddard	Sep-25	Aug-25	These will be provided when available.	In progress
25-3	5 June 2025: Ofsted and CQC Thematic Review Into Children Who Are Not in School	Officers to bring an update on the family hubs to a future meeting of the CYP Scrutiny Committee.	Dave Wraight	Nov-25	Aug-25	Families First Reforms conitnue to be explored and plans develoepd to deliver which includes family hubs - agenda item for next Scrutiny	In progress
25-4	5 June 2025: Ofsted and CQC Thematic Review Into Children Who Are Not in School	Officers to provide data in relation to the Dynamic Support Register.	Dora Gouvias-Scholfield	Dec-25	Aug-25	A multi-agency audit across Berkshire West is being arranged for October, therefore feedback on this area could be provided to a future meeting	In progress

25-5	5 June 2025: Ofsted and CQC Thematic Review Into Children Who Are Not in School	Officers to bring a report on exclusions to a future meeting of the CYP Scrutiny Committee	Neil Goddard	Sep-25	Aug-25	A report will be scheduled fro a future meeting	In progress
25-6	5 June 2025: Ofsted and CQC Thematic Review Into Children Who Are Not in School	Officers to bring a report on attendance to a future meeting of the CYP Scrutiny Committee	Neil Goddard	Sep-25	Aug-25	A report on educational attendance, attainment and outcomes for children is programmed for the December meeting	In progress
25-7	5 June 2025: Delivering Better Value in SEND Closedown and the Innovation in SEND Delivery Plan	Officers to bring a report on the High Needs Block and implementation of the SEND Strategy Delivery Plan to a future meeting.	Hannah Geddert	Sep-25	Aug-25	Report on the agenda for 11 September meeting.	Complete
25-8	5 June 2025: Work Programme	Discuss potential Task and Finish Groups at the September meeting.	Gordon Oliver	Sep-25	Aug-25	To be discussed as part of the Work Programme item.	In progress

Last updated: 27-Aug-25

Project Management Task and Finish Group:
1 September 2025

Item 4 – Declarations of Interest

Verbal Item

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Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee -
11 September 2025

Item 5 – Petitions

Verbal Item

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Youth Justice Plan 2025/26

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	18 September 2025
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Heather Codling
Report Author:	Dave Wraight
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4666

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide members with oversight of the annual Youth Justice Plan for 2025/26 which is submitted to the Youth Justice Board.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 Members are requested to agree and formally endorse the Youth Justice Plan 2025/2026. The Youth Justice Support Team is a statutory service with contributions from partners including Police, Probation and Health, as such the plan has been formed in conjunction with those partners and been through a consultation process with the Youth Justice Management Group and the Building Communities Together Partnership where those partners are present.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	The Youth Justice Support Team has direct funding from a number of sources including the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Probation and the Youth Justice Board and payments in kind through seconded staff from Police and Health.
Human Resource:	The Youth Justice Support Team contains employees of the Local Authority alongside seconded staff from other agencies all co-located forming a multi-agency team to provide youth justice services as defined by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, a staffing chart is found in the appendices of the Youth Justice Plan.

Legal:	Section 40 Crime and Disorder Act 1998 provides a duty on the local authority after consultation with relevant person and bodies to formulate and implement a plan setting out how youth justice services are to be provided and funding and how the youth offending teams are to be composed and funded, how they operate and what functions they are to carry out. In addition, there is statutory guidance Youth Justice Plans: guidance for Youth Justice services dated January 2025. This sets out the minimum information required in our plan.			
Risk Management:	The Youth Justice Support Team have responsibilities to supervise and manage children who pose a risk of causing serious harm and risk of reoffending in the community. The team work in partnership with Thames Valley Police and other partners to manage and mitigate those risks utilising risk management frameworks including Risk Management Forum and MAPPA.			
Property:	The Youth Justice Support Team is based at Merchant House.			
Policy:	The Youth Justice Plan outline is determined by the Youth Justice Board in their guidance to provide national consistency.			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?	X			The Youth Justice Plan explores disproportionality in the youth justice system and proposes measures that seek to monitor and address those areas of over representation.

B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	X			The Youth Justice Plan explores disproportionality in the youth justice system and proposes measures that seek to monitor and address those areas of over representation.
Environmental Impact:		X		No specific environmental impact
Health Impact:	X			The seconded health staff provide a service to children who often do not access health care, therefore this approach enhances their access to health services and improved health outcomes
ICT Impact:		X		No specific ICT impact
Digital Services Impact:		X		No specific Digital Services Impact
Council Strategy Priorities:	X			The Youth Justice plan supports two of the Councils strategic priorities: A fairer West Berkshire with opportunities for all and Thriving communities with a strong local voice.
Core Business:	X			The Youth Justice Plan interfaces with a number of council focuses as contained in the Building Communities Together plan, Health and Wellbeing Plan, Serious Violence Plan, work to reduce suspension and exclusion and many others.
Data Impact:		X		No specific data impact

<p>Consultation and Engagement:</p>	<p>The Youth Justice Plan has been created in consultation with children, young people and parents who use Youth Justice services. Staff and volunteers at the YJST have contributed to the plan. The Youth Justice Management Group and the Building Communities Together Partnership have both been consulted – these partnerships include the statutory partners Police, Health, Probation and others including the voluntary sector.</p>
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4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 Local authority partnerships have a statutory duty to submit a youth justice plan relating to their provision of youth justice services. Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 sets out the youth justice partnership's responsibilities in producing a plan. It states that it is the duty of each local authority, in consultation with the partner agencies, to formulate and implement an annual youth justice plan, setting out how youth justice services in the area are to be provided and funded, how they will operate, and what functions will be carried out. The plan should address how services will prevent offending behaviour and reduce reoffending.
- 4.2 The Youth Justice Plan is attached as Appendix B. The plan has been produced in consultation with a wide number of stakeholders and with the partnership oversight groups Youth Justice Management Group and the Building Communities Together Partnership. It has been formulated using the Youth Justice Board guidance 2025/2026 to ensure compliance.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.1 The Annual Youth Justice Plan serves as a roadmap, guiding the efforts of the partnership to support children, young people and their parents to maximise their life chances away from the criminal justice system. The Youth Justice partnership have a strong track record of working collaboratively to address issues in the community and create opportunities for children and young people to thrive.
- 5.2 The Youth Justice Support Team was inspected by HMI Probation in 2023 and judged to be outstanding. In March 2025 the Youth Justice Board indicated that the YJST had been moved to Quadrant 1 noting that this was a light touch oversight given the strengths and performance of the team.

Background

- 5.3 The partnership recognise that much of what is planned can only be delivered with others, be that our statutory partners such as the Thames Valley Police, Health, Probation or other key organisations in the voluntary and education sectors. The Youth Justice Plan is designed to build on the partnerships already in place, to develop our joint arrangements further and to ensure that we target our shared efforts and resources

into approaches that work and produce real, lasting outcomes for children and families in West Berkshire.

- 5.4 The Youth Justice Plan represents an unwavering commitment to transform the lives of children in West Berkshire. It is recognised that children involved in the youth justice system tend to have experienced more challenges and trauma than many of their peers, a cohort profile is included in this plan. This plan sets out the progress against the actions from the previous year, key performance indicators and sets out the plan for the coming year.
- 5.5 The priorities outlined in the plan include;: Enhancing Early Intervention and Prevention by expanding and evaluating the use of prevention letters, increase school-based interventions through the Positive Intervention Programme. Strengthening evidence-based reflective practice by using evidence-based tools. Improve Out-of-Court Disposals and diversion by fully implementing and evaluating the Youth Deferred Prosecution and strengthening Joint Decision-Making Panels. Maintaining strong approaches to public protection and risk management. Support for Education, Training, and Employment outcomes and strengthening our multi-agency approach to reduce exclusions and improve attendance. Elevating victim engagement and restorative practices by benchmarking and auditing victim-related practices and taking appropriate action.
- 5.6 Contained within the plan is detailed information on the profile of the children who come to the attention of the police, year by year there are fluctuations and changes in those demographics. The detailed profile information contained in the plan enables the partnership to tailor approaches to the prevention of offending, targeting resources to address areas of concern.

Proposal

- 5.7 The Youth Justice Plan 2025/26 has been discussed and endorsed by the Youth Justice Management Group and the Building Communities Together Partnership. It is proposed that members agree the Youth Justice Plan.

6 Other options considered

- 6.1 The youth justice plan could not be endorsed or be rejected and rewritten, however, this course of action is not recommended given the wide consultation and engagement that has already taken place in the development and creation of the attached plan.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 It is recommended that members agree and formally endorse the Youth Justice Plan 2025/2026.

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix A – Equalities Impact Assessment
- 8.2 Appendix B – Youth Justice Plan 2025/2026

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☒ No: ☐

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval ☐

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council ☐

Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position ☐

Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months ☐

Item is Urgent Key Decision ☐

Report is to note only ☐

Officer details:

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Job Title: Service Manager
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West Berkshire Council
Equity Impact Assessment

TEMPLATE

March 2023

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Section 1: Summary details

Directorate and Service Area	People Directorate, Childrens Services, Youth Justice Support Team
What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).	Members are requested to agree and formally endorse the Youth Justice Plan 2025/2026.
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	It is a new plan, replacing the Youth Justice Plan for 2024/2025
Summary of assessment Briefly summarise the policy or proposed service change. Summarise possible impacts. Does the proposal bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community? (following completion of the assessment).	Each Local Authority area partnership has a duty to produce an annual youth Justice plan that will identify how services will prevent offending behaviour and reduce reoffending. The Youth Justice plan does not seek to bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage groups or individuals. The plan recognises where there is over representation of certain groups in the youth justice system and seeks to address that disproportionality and over representation.
Completed By	Dave Wraight
Authorised By	
Date of Assessment	25/06/2025

Section 2: Detail of proposal

<p>Context / Background</p> <p>Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.</p>	<p>Local authority partnerships have a statutory duty to submit a youth justice plan relating to their provision of youth justice services (YJSs). Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 sets out the youth justice partnership's responsibilities in producing a plan. It states that it is the duty of each local authority, in consultation with the partner agencies, to formulate and implement an annual youth justice plan, setting out how YJSs in their area are to be provided and funded, how they will operate, and what functions will be carried out. The plan should address the functions assigned to a YJS, including how services will prevent offending behaviour and reduce reoffending.</p>
<p>Proposals</p> <p>Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.</p>	<p>It is proposed members agree and endorse the Youth Justice Plan 2025/26 alongside the existing agreement of the Building Communities Together Partnership and the Youth Justice Management Group. The Youth Justice Plan sets out in detail the specific actions that will be taken during the course of the year.</p>
<p>Evidence / Intelligence</p> <p>List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that supports your proposals and can help to inform the judgements you make about potential impact on different individuals, communities or groups and our</p>	<p>The Youth Justice Support Team sought the views of children, volunteers, staff, Youth Justice Management Group and partner agencies in the production of the YJ plan. Each child receiving an intervention and every volunteer were asked their views using a 'what should the team be doing in 2025/26' questionnaire. They rated their top 5 areas and there was a box to add additional suggestions.</p> <p>The comments, feedback and priorities have been incorporated into the plan to give it shape and direction.</p> <p>There is a large amount of data used to shape the plan including demographic information, cohort profile information and data relating to offending all of which have been used to form the basis of the plan.</p>

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ability to deliver our climate commitments.	
<p>Alternatives considered / rejected</p> <p>Summarise any other approaches that have been considered in developing the policy or proposed service change, and the reasons why these were not adopted. This could include reasons why doing nothing is not an option.</p>	<p>The plan has been through a number of iterations and been refined following feedback from the different partners and stakeholders. The option of not doing a plan would place the Local Authority Partnership in breach of its duties under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and therefore has not been considered.</p>

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Protected Characteristics

Protected Characteristic	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The plan seeks to appropriately divert children aged 10-17 years old away from the criminal justice system.		Service Manager, YJST	Quarterly Performance Monitoring at YJ Management Group
Disability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Gender Reassignment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Marriage & Civil Partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Pregnancy & Maternity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The plan outlines the work to monitor and address racial disproportionality in the justice system		Service Manager, YJST	Quarterly Performance Monitoring at YJ Management Group

Equity Impact Assessment

Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The plan recognises proportionately more female children in the YJ system locally than nationally and seeks to tailor responses accordingly		Service Manager, YJST	Quarterly Performance Monitoring at YJ Management Group
Sexual Orientation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Religion or Belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Community Impacts

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Rural communities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Areas of deprivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	It is recognised that proportionately more children in the justice system come from areas of deprivation therefore the plan		Service Manager, YJST	Quarterly Performance Monitoring at YJ

Equity Impact Assessment

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				seeks to address issues of poverty, education and employment			Management Group
Displaced communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There are more children from the GRT community than others therefore specific work is undertaken to address this overrepresentation		Service Manager, YJST	Quarterly Performance Monitoring at YJ Management Group
Care experienced people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Children in care are over represented In the Justice system, protocols and practices are in place to divert them and reduce the impact. Children in care go on to become Care Leavers.		Service Manager, YJST	Quarterly Performance Monitoring at YJ Management Group
The Armed Forces Community	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Section 4: Review

Where bias, negative impact or disadvantage is identified, the proposal and/or implementation can be adapted or changed; meaning there is a need for regular review. This review may also be needed to reflect additional data and evidence for a fuller assessment (proportionate to the decision in question). Please state the agreed review timescale for the identified impacts of the policy implementation or service change.

Review Date	
Person Responsible for Review	
Authorised By	

EDI employee related EQiA's should now be sent to Human Resources hrenquiries@westberks.gov.uk

Youth Justice Plan 2025-2026

Youth Justice Plan

Service	West Berkshire Youth Justice Support Team
Service Manager	Dave Wraight
Chair of YJS Board	AnnMarie Dodds

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- Evidence-based practice and innovation
- Evaluation
- Priorities for the coming year
- Standards for children
- Service development
- National priority areas
 - Children from groups which are over-represented
 - Policing
 - Prevention
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Introduction

The Annual Youth Justice Plan is a strategic blueprint that charts the course for our collective efforts to support children, young people, and their families—ensuring they have every opportunity to realise their full potential. As a committed and experienced partnership, we have a proven history of working collaboratively to tackle the root causes of offending, address systemic inequalities, and create positive, sustainable opportunities for children to thrive within our community.

Guided by the Youth Justice Board’s national commitment to a 'Child First' approach, the West Berkshire Youth Justice Support Team (YJST) has embraced this ethos. This child-centred philosophy places the rights, needs, and aspirations of children and young people at the heart of service delivery.

Our partnership acknowledges that meaningful impact cannot be achieved in isolation. The work we undertake depends on strong, collaborative relationships with statutory agencies such as Thames Valley Police, Health, and Probation, alongside vital contributions from voluntary sector organisations and educational partners. This Youth Justice Plan is designed to strengthen those connections further, enhance joint delivery mechanisms, and align our shared resources towards interventions that are proven to work—delivering measurable, long-lasting change for children, young people, and families in West Berkshire.

Above all, this plan reflects our unwavering commitment to transforming the lives of children in the justice system. We understand that many of these children have faced significant adversity, trauma, and disadvantage—realities that are acknowledged and reflected in the profile data included in this plan. In response, we remain steadfast in our efforts to deliver responsive, trauma-informed services that prioritise prevention, diversion, and relationship-based practice. Through this plan, we set out the progress made over the past year, track key performance indicators, and outline a clear, ambitious pathway for the year ahead—one that aspires to see every child and young person in West Berkshire live a life free from crime and full of possibility.

Vision and strategy

The West Berkshire YJST is committed to delivering an innovative, child-centred approach to youth justice, grounded in prevention, equity, and meaningful partnership. Our strategic vision is to:

- Work proactively with the wider Council, the Health and Wellbeing Board, and the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership to identify and address risk factors linked to poor outcomes—including children’s offending—at the earliest possible stage. We aim to ensure that high-quality, evidence-informed services are in place to prevent offending and reduce the likelihood of reoffending.

- Place the best interests of children at the heart of everything we do, recognising their distinct needs, rights, capacities, and potential. Our approach is child-focused, trauma-informed, developmentally appropriate, and rooted in strong, supportive relationships. We are committed to helping children build positive futures and realise their full potential as active, valued members of society.
- Tackle disproportionality across the youth justice system, ensuring that every child is treated fairly, equitably, and with dignity—regardless of their background, identity, or circumstances.
- Champion early intervention, prevention, and diversion, promoting a childhood free from unnecessary involvement in the formal justice system. We actively work to reduce the criminogenic stigma associated with justice system contact and support children to engage with pro-social opportunities instead.
- Strengthen multi-agency support for families, working alongside partners to ensure that parents and carers are equipped with the tools, guidance, and confidence they need to nurture strong, healthy relationships and positively influence their children's behaviour.
- Embed children's voices and lived experiences into all aspects of our work, ensuring that services are shaped by meaningful collaboration with children and their carers. We are committed to fostering active participation and wider social inclusion as core components of our practice.
- Collaborate with the Building Communities Together Partnership, local Courts, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), and the Local Criminal Justice Board, to uphold the rights of victims, protect communities, and build public confidence in a youth justice system that is fair, restorative, and responsive.
- Promote children's individual strengths, interests, and aspirations, supporting the development of a positive, prosocial identity. Our goal is to create the conditions for long-term desistance, safer communities, and fewer victims of crime.

Governance, leadership, and partnership arrangements



The YJ Management Board and Community Safety Partnership (CSP) form one Building Communities Together Partnership (BCT) chaired by the Chief Executive of the Local Authority. The grouping of these partnerships in such a way allows the group to take a strategic approach to crime and disorder issues. The partnership has representation from Health, Public Health and Wellbeing, Probation, Police, OPCC, Fire Service, Children and Family Services, Adult Services, Registered Social Landlord, Voluntary Sector and council members amongst others. The Partnership agrees resource priorities including the YJST, agrees responses to relevant national and local policy development, and monitors performance by exception reporting. Since the YJST was formed, the BCT partnership has delegated the operational management to the YJ Management Group.

The YJ Management Group meets quarterly, chaired by the Director of Children's Services. All statutory partners are represented at a senior level and Building Communities Together. The Terms of Reference of the YJ Management Group include overseeing the development and implementation of the Youth Justice Plan; considering resource and workload issues; receiving reports in relation to audits of effective practice; diversity and disproportionality; approving policies and protocols. The group also ensures that Public Protection and Safeguarding issues are addressed at each meeting. In July 2024 the YJ Management Group took part in a development event with input from the Youth Justice Board in addition to workshops to develop and enhance the groups effectiveness.

The YJ Management Group takes responsibility for monitoring overall performance of the YJST with a Performance Management Report taken to each meeting. The YJ Management Group holds the YJST to account regarding the timely submission of data, compliance with

secure estate placement information, completion of standards for children audits and oversight of Critical Learning Reviews following community safeguarding and public protection incidents. Where there are areas of under-performance further multi-agency action plans are developed and agreed by the YJ Management Group with implementation monitored. Any issues that require a strategic response are escalated to the BCT Partnership. The group have benefitted from the attendance of parents, victims and young adults who have worked with the YJST giving their feedback and insight into the work of the team, areas of strength and areas of development. During the last year the YJ Management Group received the following additional reports and presentations by team members:

- Victim Audit Findings
- 'Who's In Charge' Parenting Programme report
- Summer Holiday Activity Review
- Adolescent Female Violence and aggression Report
- Supervision Audit
- Drugs in schools policy
- October Half Term Activity Review
- First Time Entrants Analysis
- Reflective Review
- Audit – APIS Report
- Annual feedback report
- February Half Term Activity Report
- Implementing PDAT Report
- HMIP Inspection Programme presentation

Each of these reports and consequent recommendations are considered by the YJST Management Group, with the YJST Manager held to account for the delivery of the actions. This is also an opportunity for team members to receive direct feedback from the Management Group and strengthen the relationship between both.

Line management of the YJST sits with the Service Director of Children and Family Services, the YJST Manager is a member of the Service Manager Team within Children and Family Service, also being responsible for managing Early Help services, co-chairing EMRAC (Exploitation, Missing Risk Assessment Conference) and the Channel Panel. This positioning, with governance through the Building Communities Together Partnership and line management within Children and Family Services enables the YJST to be strategically positioned in the most appropriate place - straddling welfare and justice. The Director of Children's Services also sits on the overarching boards.

West Berkshire Council Strategy 2023-2027 has five priorities: *A Fairer West Berkshire with opportunities for all* – vulnerable children and families supported at early stages to prevent the need for more critical or statutory services, solutions are identified to prevent homelessness, supported to access the mental health services that they need, good education attainment results. *Thriving communities with a strong local voice* – Encourage and support our local



communities to take the lead in driving what is important to them, Help our residents lead fulfilled and active lives, Work with partners and the local communities to enhance our main towns and large villages, Help our villages to remain vibrant long term. These elements of the strategy are embedded in the Youth Justice Plan.

The YJST Partnership ensures that the prevention of children offending and re-offending are key to the Youth Justice Plan and are strongly linked to other planning frameworks including the Police and Crime Plan 2024-2029 from the OPCC. The plan focusses on protecting communities, people and property, with specific targets that impact children ranging from early intervention in schools to addressing serious violence. The Thames Valley Local Criminal Justice Board has a set of objectives and priorities: Improving services for Victims and Witnesses, increasing public confidence in the Criminal Justice System and reducing reoffending with a number of specific actions that are delivered by the partnership affecting children. As noted the YJ Management Group reports to the BCT Partnership and feeds into the development of the partnership strategy. Progress against actions and performance targets is monitored, with exception reporting. The Operational Manager attends the Police partnership TTCCG meetings, Knife Crime and Serious Violence and Mini MAPS meetings to respond to local crime and anti-social behaviour and address emerging problems.



The YJST Service Manager attends the Berkshire Local Criminal Justice Group, reporting to the Thames Valley Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB). Thames Valley YJS Managers share the representation at the LCJB sub-groups. The YJST Service Manager chairs the LCJB Children's Board and sits on the LCJB. There is direct representation by the Reading YJS Manager representing the Thames Valley YJS Managers at the MAPPA Strategic Group (Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements), Wokingham YJS Manager representing at the Disproportionality Group and West Berkshire YJS Service Manager at the Out of Court Disposal Scrutiny Panel.

Communication with the courts is through the Youth Court User Group with a Youth Panel magistrate a member of the YJST Management Group.

YJST Managers continue to contribute to key groups such as the Exploitation and Missing Risk Assessment Conference (EMRAC), Life Chances Team Meetings for Children in Care, Children and Young People Voluntary Sector Meeting and Young Persons Housing Panel. In addition, the YJST Manager is a member of the Children's Prevention and Early Help Partnership, Independent Scrutiny and Impact Group and Child Exploitation Strategic Group.

The YJST Partnership has effectively ensured that the needs of children who offend are on the agenda across criminal justice and children's welfare partnerships and are therefore able to input into relevant planning processes.

In terms of staffing the YJST has the following:

- Service Manager 0.6 fte
- Operational Manager
- Assistant Team Manager
- Two social work posts one at senior level
- Two YJST Officer posts
- Turnaround Worker
- Restorative Justice and Volunteer Coordinator
- Information Analyst 0.6 fte
- Probation Link Officer 0.7 fte
- Teacher 0.6 fte
- Seconded Police officer
- CAMHS Health and Justice Physical Health Nurse 0.27 fte
- CAMHS Health and Justice Advanced Mental Health Professional 0.33 fte
- CAMHS Health and Justice Speech and Language Therapist 0.2 fte
- Apprentice Business Assistant
- Business Support Officer

The YJST comprises of full time and part time staff, 15 female staff and 2 male staff with one post in recruitment phase. All the staff who hold cases have been trained in Universal Safeguarding, Child Exploitation, ACE's, Trauma Informed Practice, Assessment Planning and Intervention (APIS), Prevent and Restorative Justice. A comprehensive and ongoing training programme is in place to ensure continued professional development for the staff group.

Local context – West Berkshire

Profile of the Community Resolution, Turnaround and Prevention Cohort



Profile of the Out of Court Disposals Cohort



Profile of Court Disposals Cohort



Progress on previous plan:

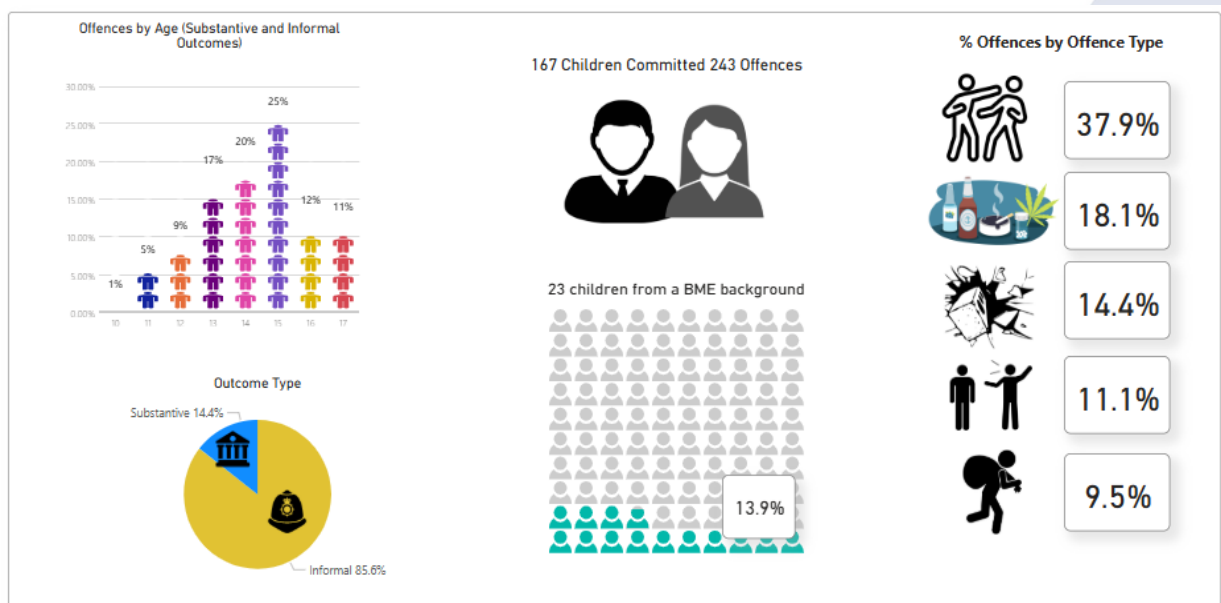
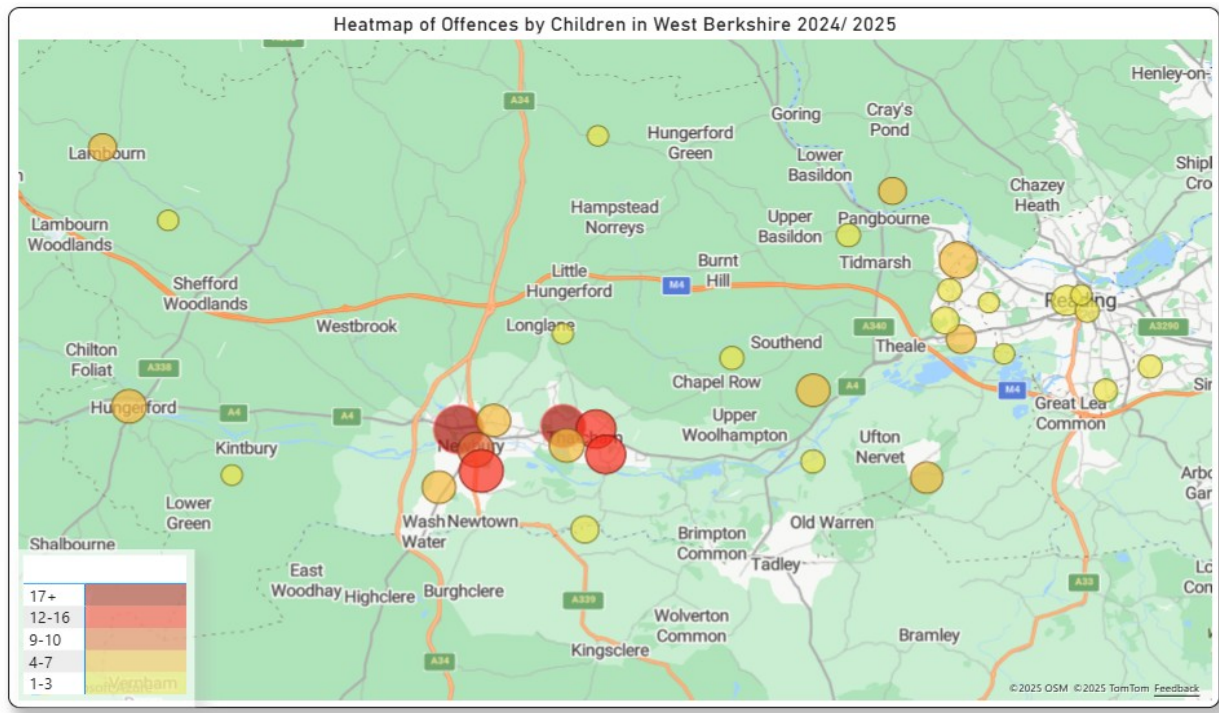
The Youth Justice Plan 2024/25 set out a number of targets to be carried out across the partnership, these were pulled together in one action plan. There were 35 targets set out in last year's plan, the Service Manager provides an update on the action plan which is overseen and scrutinised by the Management Group via quarterly reporting. A RAG rated action plan and members of the team attend the Management Group meetings to present their reports of work undertaken. Throughout the year some targets were reprioritised due to staff vacancies and changes within the partnership actions.

Key achievements of the last year have been;

- The introduction of Act Now – OPCC funded one year project to support children in police custody for serious violence and weapon offences
- Introduction of Joint Decision-Making Panels (JDMP), partnership panel to make outcome decision for children
- Outcome 22 and deferred caution – development work continued, and this outcome is available in Thames Valley from April 2025
- Implementation of the National Prevention and Diversion Assessment Tool (PDAT)
- Development of child friendly assessment and plans
- AQA awards – 18 children achieved certification for their achievements
- AQA awards have been used to create opportunities for children not in full time education.

- Turnaround funding has been used to create opportunities for children and families to integrate into their local communities, access to half term activities and spending time together
- First Aid – the Nurse and Police Officer delivered basic first aid courses to children, they receive an AQA award upon successful completion
- Arts awards – partnered with City Arts to provide children the opportunity to create and submit art to the Koestler Award
- Youth Café at the local youth centre has been used to meet children in the community and introduce them to universal services
- Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) forum led by Forensic Physiologist offered reflection and advice to led practitioners and arranged by YJST
- National Girls Forum – over 80 YJS teams across England and led by YJB to learn from research and good practice
- Reflective practice; 7 direct observations, 3 assessment reflections and 6 reflective practice forums throughout 24/25
- Parenting - Increase in parenting referrals and attendance at Who's in Charge (WiC) group
- YJST team members continue to deliver specialist inputs to the parenting group and Volunteers training sessions; such as sleep training, GRT cultural awareness and child first briefing.
- Social Work student successfully undertaking her final year placement.
- Implementation of Communication Tools resource created by Speech and Language Therapist to support communication friendly interventions and practice
- Implementation of communication passports to support the voice of the child in ensuring their needs are known by all professionals who work with them
- The Nurse has delivered 14 vaccinations to children that have missed routine childhood vaccinations
- Health cards – the nurse has introduced these to enable staff to prioritise, be aware and have an understanding of individual children's allergies/health conditions ensuring that children, when in our care, are always supported and safe
- Health screening for all children open to YJST, providing early identification of any unmet needs
- Continued positive professional relationship with the courts

Performance over the previous Year:



In 2024, there was a 14.4% increase in the number of children receiving either an informal or substantive outcome, rising from 146 in 2023 to 167 in 2024. This follows a 15.6% decrease the previous year, with the total number of children in 2024 still lower than in 2022. The increase is due to a 27.7% rise in children receiving informal outcomes, while those receiving substantive outcomes decreased by almost a third (31.3%), from 32 in 2023 to 22 in 2024.

Of the 22 children given a substantive outcome, 14 were First Time Entrants to the youth justice system, a further decrease of 46.2% from 2023. Of these FTEs, 6 (42.9%) had previously received a Community Resolution compared to 65.4% in the previous year. Conversely, the number of young people receiving either a first informal or formal outcome (First Time Offender) increased by 28.9% from 97 in 2023 to 125 in 2024.

Offences leading to a Community Resolution increased by 23.3% from 159 in 2023 to 196 in 2024. This follows a 17.2% decline in the previous reporting period. There has been a decline in the number of offences leading to a substantive outcome from 63 in 2023 to 47 in 2024.

Offence Type

In 2024, the most prevalent offences leading to either a substantive outcome or a Community Resolution were:

- **Violence against the Person: 37.9% (92 offences)**
- **Drugs: 18.1% (44 offences)**
- **Criminal Damage: 14.4% (35 offences)**
- **Public Order: 11.1% (27 offences)**

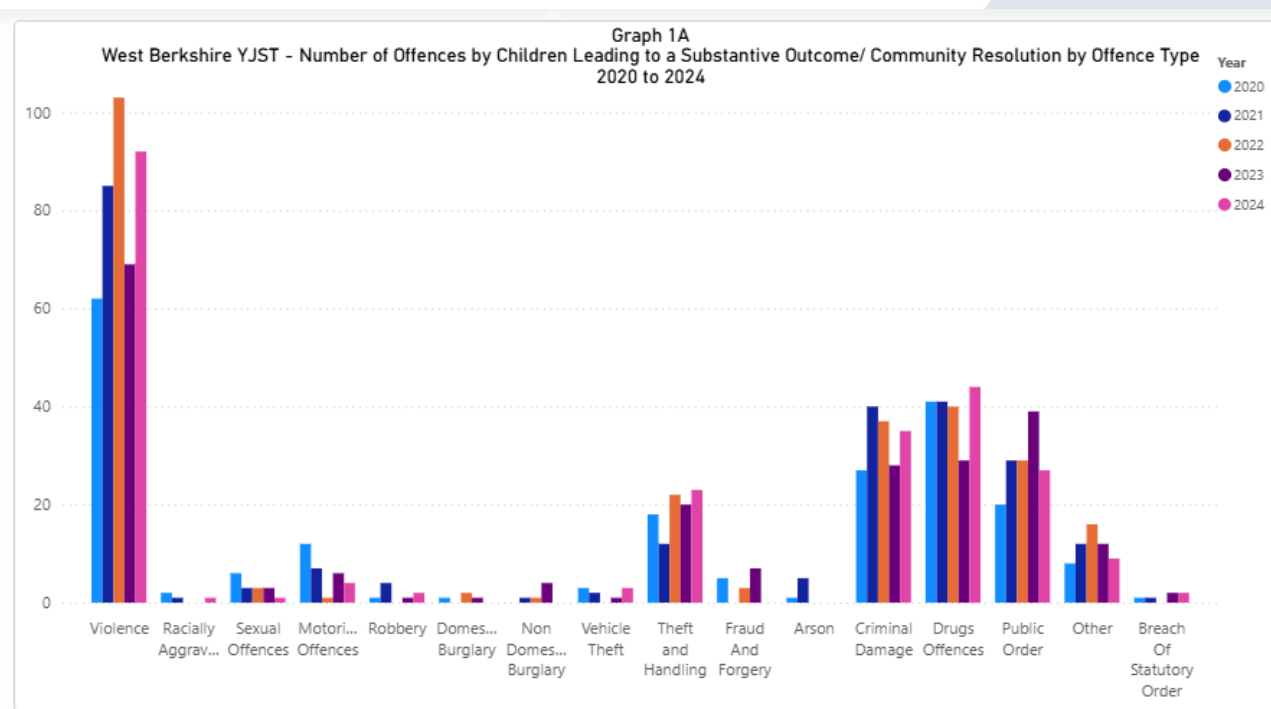
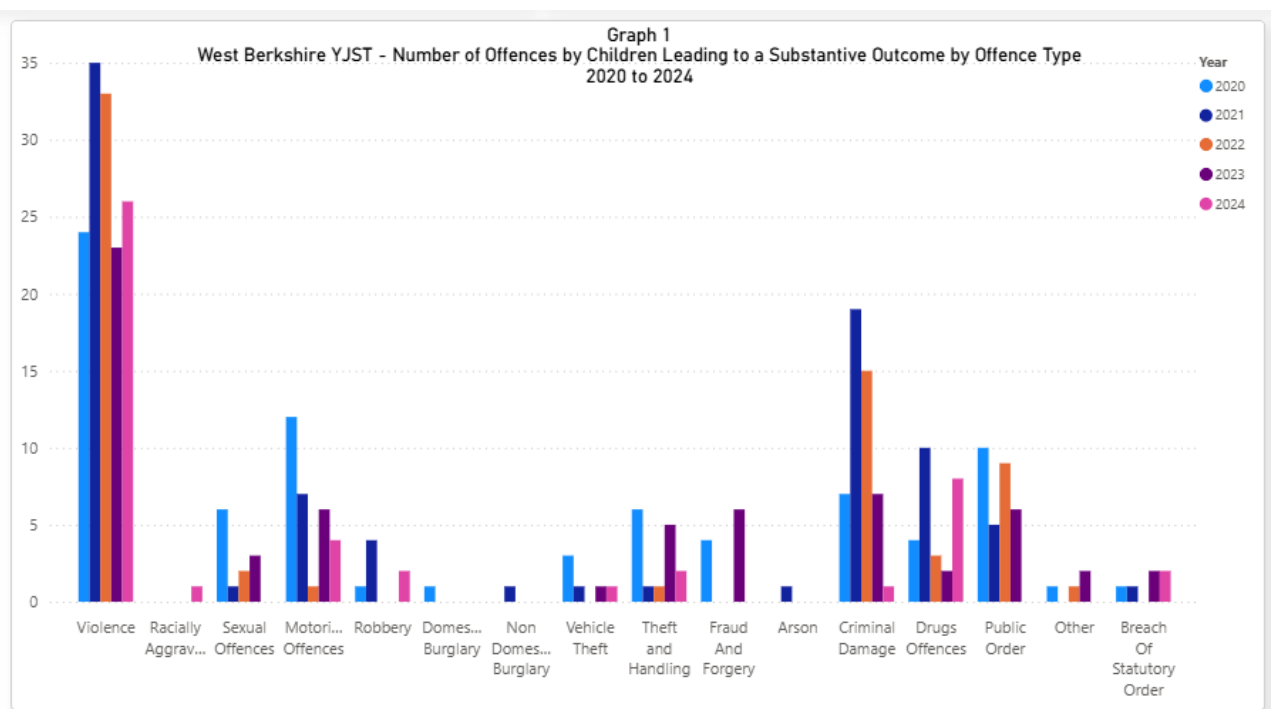
Violence against the Person remains the most prevalent offence category, increasing by 33.3% from 2023 to 2024. This follows a decline of a similar margin in the previous year. The number of children committing violent offences has increased, but by a lower rate (15.3%), indicating that more children are committing multiple violent offences.

- Ninety of the ninety-two offences have a YJB Gravity level of 3, two have a gravity level of 5.
- A lower proportion of offences led to a substantive outcome (28.3%) compared to 33.3% in 2023.
- The most common violent offence remains Assault by Beating (62 offences).
- Four children committed seven offences of violence against an emergency worker.
- Three children received outcomes for possessing a knife blade/sharp pointed article in a public place compared to five in the previous year.

Drug offences recorded a sharp increase of 51.7%, from 29 in 2023 to 44 in 2024, now representing 18.1% of all offences. This follows a decline in the previous reporting year. The number of children committing drug offences increased by a lesser rate of 24.1%. An increased proportion of offences led to a substantive outcome in 2024, rising from 6.9% in 2023 to 18.2% in 2024. Of the 44 offences committed, 40 relate to possession of a class B drug and 4 to the supply of a class B or class A drug.

Following a decline of 24.3% in 2023, the number of **criminal damage** offences committed by children increased by a similar percentage, up 25% from 28 in 2023 to 35 in 2024. The proportion of offences leading to a substantive outcome declined from 25% in 2023 to 2.9%. Notably, one child committed five of the seven offences that led to a substantive outcome in 2023.

To summarise, a 27.7% increase in children receiving an informal outcome has directly contributed to the overall 14.4% increase in the number of children entering the youth justice system which follows a significant decrease in the previous reporting year. Correspondingly, the number of offences committed by children increased by 9.5% to 243 with the average number of offences per offender remaining at 1.5. Please refer to Graphs 1 and 1A.



Children Committing Crime

Following a decline in 2023, the number of children entering the youth justice system has increased by 14.4% from 146 in 2023 to 167 in 2024.

Boys:

- In 2024, 117 boys committed 169 offences, an increase of 18.2% and 9%, respectively. However, the number of male offenders remains lower than 2022 and at a similar level to 2021. The number of offences leading to a substantive outcome continues to decrease and now represent 19.5% of outcomes compared to 29.7% in the previous year. Offences by offender has decreased from 1.6 to 1.4 and is lower than that of the female cohort.
- Offences of violence by boys increased by 62.2% from 37 in 2023 to 60 in 2024. This is lower than the 2022 rate. While the number of offences leading to a substantive outcome remains the same as the previous year at 23, they now represent 23.3% of outcomes compared to 37.8% in 2023.
- Drugs offences committed by boys has increased by 48.1% overall. 20% of male drug offences lead to a substantive outcome compared with 3.7% in 2023, potentially reflecting an increase in seriousness of drugs offending.

Girls:

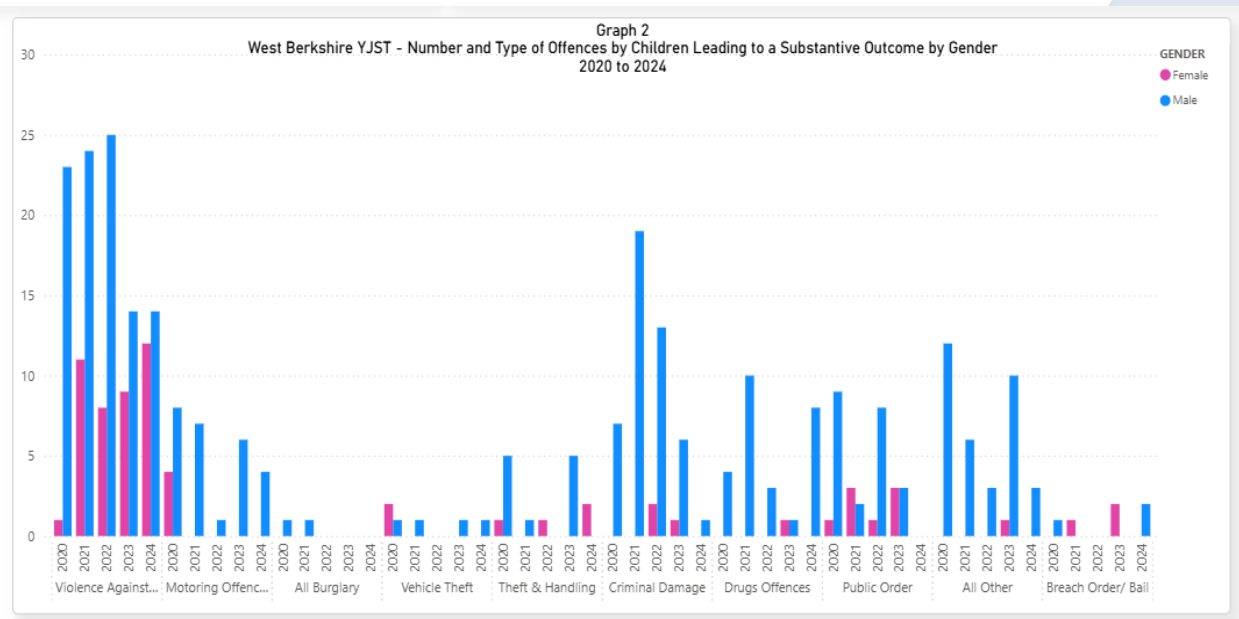
- The number of female offenders has marginally increased by 3 from 47 in 2023 to 50 in the current period. With a higher increase in boys, the proportion of females in the cohort has declined from 32.2% to 29.9% of offenders. Of note, females commit more offences per offender at a rate of 1.5 versus 1.4 for boys.
- The distribution of girls' offences by offence type has not changed significantly with the number of violent offences remaining the same as 2023 (32) and representing 43.2% of all offending. The proportion of the violent offences leading to a substantive outcome has increased from 28.1% in 2023 to 37.5% in 2024. There have been small increases in Theft and Handling (13), Criminal Damage (8) and Drugs offences (4).

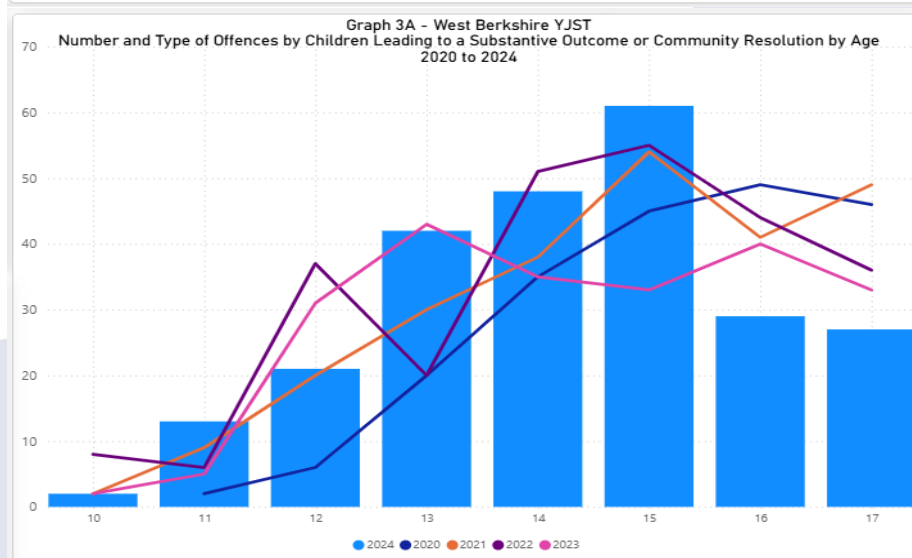
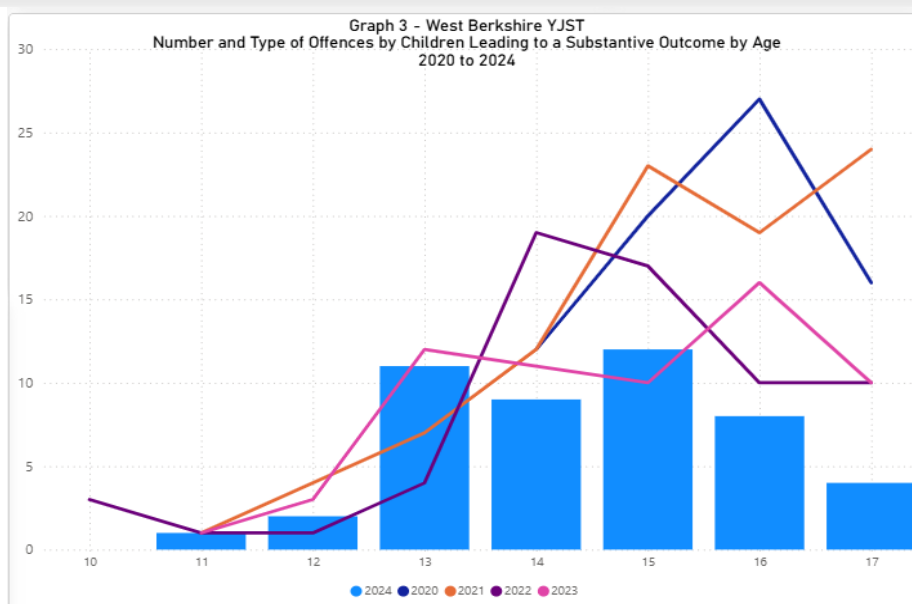
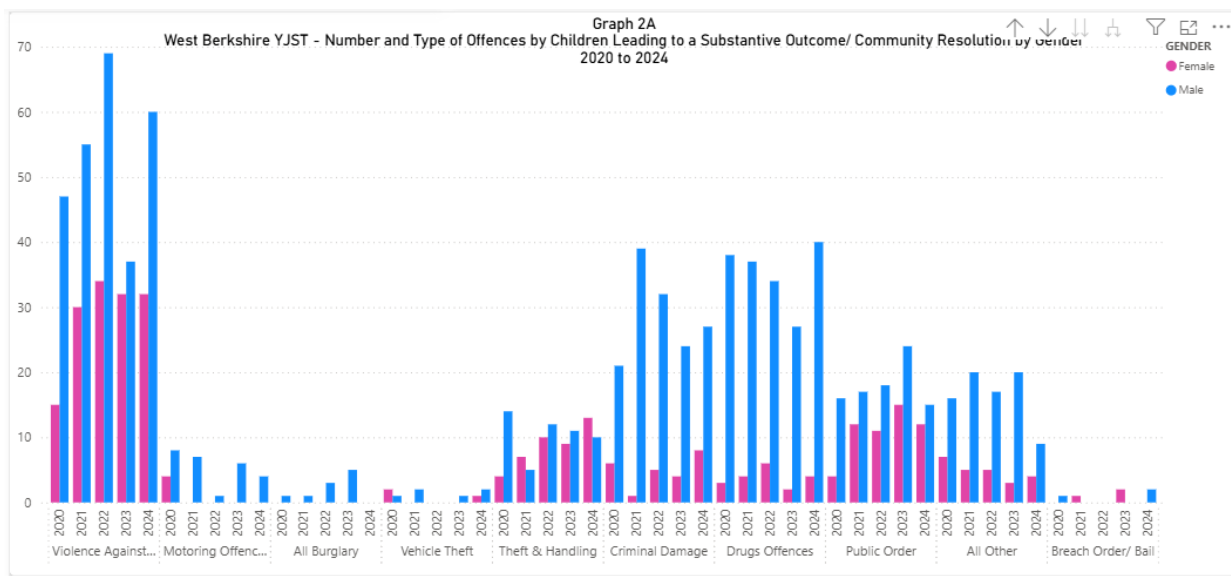
Age:

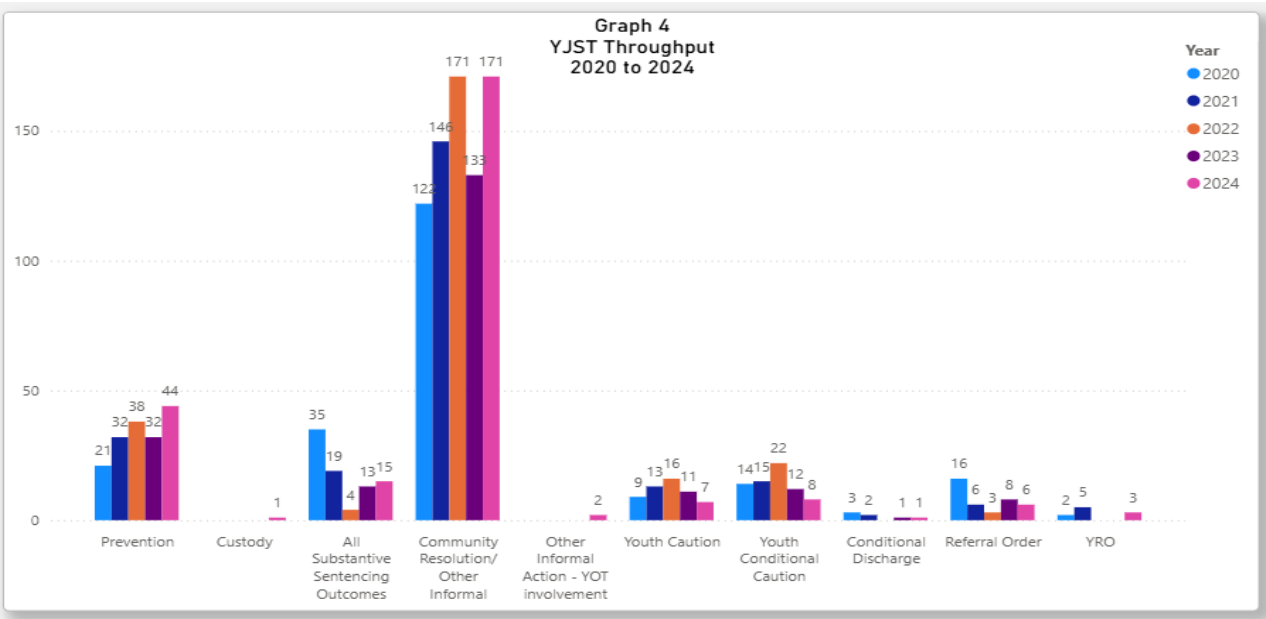
- The peak age for receiving either a formal or informal outcome has increased from 13 in 2023 to 15 in the current reporting period, which is more in keeping with previous years with the peak age sitting at 15/16. In the 15-year-old group, 44 children committed 25.1% (61) of all offences. 2024 has also seen a spike in offences committed by 11-year-olds with 9 children committing 13 offences.

- The peak age for offences leading to a substantive is 15. The age at which children receive an informal outcome increases with each age group, peaking at 15 and falling sharply at the ages of 16/17.
- The peak age of offending for girls is within the 13-15 years age group with 56 offences committed and representing 75.7% of all offending. All female substantive outcomes fall within this group. The peak age for boys is 15, up from 13 in the previous period with this age group now committing 24.9% of all male offences.
- The youngest offenders were 11 years old for boys (6) and 10 years old for girls (2).
- Violent offences were committed by children in all except the 10-year-old age group with girls more likely to commit offences between the ages of 13-15 and boys peaking at a similar age but represented across the age ranges.

The detailed demographic information combined with the offence type data and the profile date enables the youth Justice Support Team to target intervention and support in a more effective manner understanding the cohort better.







Risks and Issues:

Challenges, issues and risks are monitored via the quarterly YJST Management Group. These include;

- Financial pressures: there remains pressures across all budgets both within the Local Authority and in the wider partnership. There have been changes in the bidding process that the Youth Justice Service can utilise.
- Education for children: there is a high level of suspension and exclusion from school within West Berkshire. Poor attendance of children in education remains a significant risk factor to offending.
- Turnaround project funded by the MoJ will end in March 2026, this creates less resources for supporting children at the point of arrest and when the police take no further action. Consideration throughout this year will be required to seek to absorb this type of work into the work of the team.
- There continues to be significant increase in girls who offend, 31% is above the national average of 14% (2023-24)
- HMIP inspection of West Berkshire YJST in December 2022 recommended the partnership works together to secure a seconded Probation Officer, this continues to be a challenge, however there have been significant mitigations in place to address the identified needs.
- Thames Valley Police has changed the model of policing from one that is co-terminus with the Local Authority to one that covers three Local Authorities – there is a risk that there will be a reduction of resources or dilution of focus on West Berkshire.
- Local Authority devolution is on the horizon and will affect how and where services are delivered in the future.

- There is significant change in wider Children's Services with the implementation of Family Help reforms – this is both a risk and opportunity to ensure that vulnerable children receive the right support at the right time by the right person.
- There are changes taking place with the development of the Violence Prevention Partnerships and Young Futures Panels – the timeframe for the implementation creates a risk for the delivery of this duty.

Child First:

The work of the YJST is unpinned by the national Youth Justice Board (YJB) Child First Principles which are set out below:

As children	Prioritise the best interests of children and recognising their particular needs, capacities, rights and potential. All work is child-focused, developmentally informed, acknowledges structural barriers and meets responsibilities towards children.
Building pro-social identity	Promote children's individual strengths and capacities to develop their pro-social identity for sustainable desistance, leading to safer communities and fewer victims. All work is constructive and future-focused, built on supportive relationships that empower children to fulfil their potential and make positive contributions to society.
Collaborating with children	Encourage children's active participation, engagement and wider social inclusion. All work is a meaningful collaboration with children and their carers.
Diverting from stigma	Promote a childhood removed from the justice system, using pre-emptive prevention, diversion and minimal intervention. All work minimises criminogenic stigma from contact with the system.

Source: [PowerPoint Presentation \(yjresourcehub.uk\)](https://www.yjresourcehub.uk/)

Voice of the child/feedback:

The YJST sought the views of children and volunteers in the production of the YJ plan. Children receiving an intervention and volunteers were asked their views using a 'what should the YJST focus on in 2025/26 survey. They picked their top four priorities and there was a box to add additional suggestions.

Children said -

The top three areas that were most important were:

1. Preventing children from committing crime
2. Helping Children stay in education and do well
3. Supporting children with positive activities / community events

Volunteers said –

The top three areas that were most important were:

1. Helping Parents to support their children
2. Address serious violence, exploitation and contextual safeguarding
3. Helping children stay in Education and do well.

Volunteers added additional suggestions which included access to substance misuse support.

In addition to those areas the YJ Management Group recognised the following areas would also benefit from attention:

1. Supporting children from groups which are over represented
2. Diverting children to outcomes that don't damage their future
3. Work with families, particularly younger siblings

The YJST seeks ways to support children to provide feedback about the service they receive at the YJST and we support children working with the YJST to engage in wider forums/opportunities to have their voices heard. These include:

- Children and their parents are invited to provide feedback in reviews of their intervention, their views on the service lead to changes in the intervention delivery and any themes are considered to change wider service delivery
- All children who work with the YJST, and their parents are invited to complete a confidential questionnaire at the end of their intervention and the Service Manager reviews all of these and makes amendments to services if required – last year a total of 37 questionnaire's (21 children and 16 parent) were received. An annual report is written for the Management Group that captures that feedback
- Groups take place on an occasional basis focusing on specific topics, these allow in-depth exploration of a topic with a group of young people and subsequent actions taken
- All young people are informed of the complaints process at the start of the intervention, and sign to say that this has occurred
- All parents completing parenting courses with the YJST provide feedback on their experience of the group work
- All victims of crime involving children in the YJST are asked for feedback on services provided by the YJST, particularly restorative interventions.

Resources and services

The YJST is funded from a variety of sources, as outlined in the table below, The Secretary of State under their power in section 41 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 has the power to make grants to local authorities for the purposes of the operation of the youth justice system and the provision of youth justice services. There are certain grant conditions attached to this funding, West Berkshire YJST complies with all the conditions as set out in the grant conditions documents.

The YJST uses the Local Authority funding, Youth Justice Grant, partner contributions and available additional grants to deliver youth justice services with the aim of reducing the number of children in the youth justice system and preventing further offending.

The YJST is active in seeking to use other funding beyond the core funding to extend the opportunities to support and engage with children at an appropriate time. These opportunities include:

Turnaround – funding from the Ministry of Justice is secure until March 2026, during this year decisions will be made about any future funding of the project. The YJ Information officer is part of a national evaluation of the scheme which will inform any future funding arrangements.

Act Now – the initial funding is in place until November 2024, however, through careful use of resources and collaboration with Turnaround, the reach has been extended until March 2026. West Berkshire YJST will work with other YJS and the OPCC to look at future funding opportunities for this scheme.

Violence Prevention Partnership – Thames Valley is a Violence Reduction area and as such has funding directed towards this area of work. Under the auspices of the OPCC there is funding being directed to each Local Authority to develop and implement initiatives to prevent offences of violence, as such the YJST is involved with the Building Communities Together Partnership to utilise this funding in the ongoing prevention of serious violence.

YJ Management Group Development:

New members of the YJ Management Group liaise with the either the Service Manager or Chair of the Management Group to receive an induction into the role of group member. A comprehensive induction pack is provided to each of the members of the group detailing their roles, responsibilities and contribution. The YJ Management Group has the responsibility for the YJST governance, strategically leading across relevant partners to ensure a high-quality service is provided to all children and victims. During the past year the management group have received reports and presentations on a range of work undertaken by the team, alongside partnership updates and performance reports. The YJB has provided input on their Oversight Framework to support the understanding of the group members.

During 2024 there were changes in the membership of the Youth Justice Management group, with a number of long-standing participants finishing their partnership roles. Therefore, in July 2024 a development session took place to provide training, deepen understanding and contextualise the functions of the Youth Justice Management Group as a foundation for the group to further develop its governance function for the Youth Justice System locally.

Workforce Development:

The YJST recognises that our most important asset is our staff therefore we place a very high importance on recruiting, inducting, training and retaining our staff. The YJST take an individual, operational and strategic approach to workforce development. Individual level – annual appraisals take place identifying individual professional development, ensuring any professional registration requirements are met, such as social work registration. Operational level – There is a range of learning activities and events that take place throughout the year to ensure the team reflects on practice and new guidance. These include reflective forums, learning from audits and benchmarking of national reports to improve the work with children, families and victims. Strategic level – National and Partnership updates provide us an

opportunity to continue to develop our approach and services. Such as, the introduction of the Prevention and Diversion Assessment tool. The continued focus on Child First and integration in policy.

The training plan for 2025/26 builds on the training delivered over the previous years and professional backgrounds of the team. In the past year bespoke training was delivered – implementing the prevention and diversion assessment tool and follow up quality assurance work, social work practice education development, neurodiversity, child first in practice, speech and language resources and case specific reflective learning. One team member completed their Assessed and Support Year in Employment (ASYE) and one business administration apprenticeship was completed. Training and development that is planned for 2025/26 includes, Appropriate Adult and MAPPA refresher training, health led training, AIM3 intervention, Youth Justice Effective Practice Certificate, cognitive bias and police leadership training. Development activities will also include learning from HMIP inspection reports and any National publications. The team offer development and training opportunities to partners and agencies to deepen their understanding and approach to children in the justice system.

Evidence-based practice and innovation:

West Berkshire YJST is a small team therefore doesn't usually attract wider services to undertake evaluation and randomised control samples as required by academics. However, there are a number of areas of emerging practice and innovation that have been piloted in the locality.

- Health packs – The Nurse created health packs following research about health inequalities in oral health and her own findings from health assessments with children. These include dental care with information on how to brush your teeth as evidence shows that poor dental hygiene affects physical and mental health.
- Food hampers – following a number of children attending sessions hungry the Nurse suggested food be readily available to children. Food hampers are now in both rooms where children attend, they can help themselves and there are bags to take food away with them. YJ Officers can also take food hampers to children at home or in the community.
- First aid – The YJ Police Officer and Nurse have partnered to deliver basic first aid training with children. This is open to all children, and they gained AQA award recognising their completion and achievement.
- Communication passports and a range of resources – the Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT) regularly delivers training to the team. This year a SLC pack is available to all workers with a range of resources to support their work with children. Communication Passport training has taken place so YJ Officers can create passports and these are overseen but the SaLT, creating more time for direct intervention by the SaLT.



- Positive activities for children – A booklet has been updated providing children with information on a range of community clubs and organisations. This is provided to all children open to YJST at their initial session to support community integration.

Standards for children

There has been no national requirement to complete a formal self-assessment against the Standards for Youth Justice Services, the last being in 2023 against Standard 2: work in court. In February 2025 the YJB published a report with the findings of the national audit submission. The report underscores the importance of ensuring that children receive fair treatment and appropriate support during court proceedings and provides valuable insights into areas where improvements can be made to improve the experiences of children at court. The Assistant Team Manager has undertaken observations of court staff throughout this year as a commitment to ensuring good quality practice is undertaken.

Each year the YJST sets out a number of internal audits to assess the work of the YJST against standards for children, HMIP standards and codes of practices. All audits are written into a report and presented for scrutiny at the Management Group meetings, all actions are overseen by the Group.

The action plan enclosed with the YJ Plan sets out the planned internal auditing for the coming year.

Service Development

There are not any recent HMIP inspections or critical learning reviews that require service development. However, during the last year we completed an internal reflective learning review following a child being sentenced to custody following several breaches of a Community Order.

Reflective learning review: The first section of the reflective review was specifically for YJST staff who worked directly with the child and allowed the participants to talk through their involvement across the timeline. The second part included additional external partners and reflected on what went well, what was a challenge and what steps needed to be taken next. The review highlighted a range of positive, learning/reflective/questions along with some areas of development. The learning review and seven action points was presented to the Management Group for scrutiny in January 2025.



There are a number of themes that our action plan will focus on; these include:

1. Enhance Early Intervention and Prevention

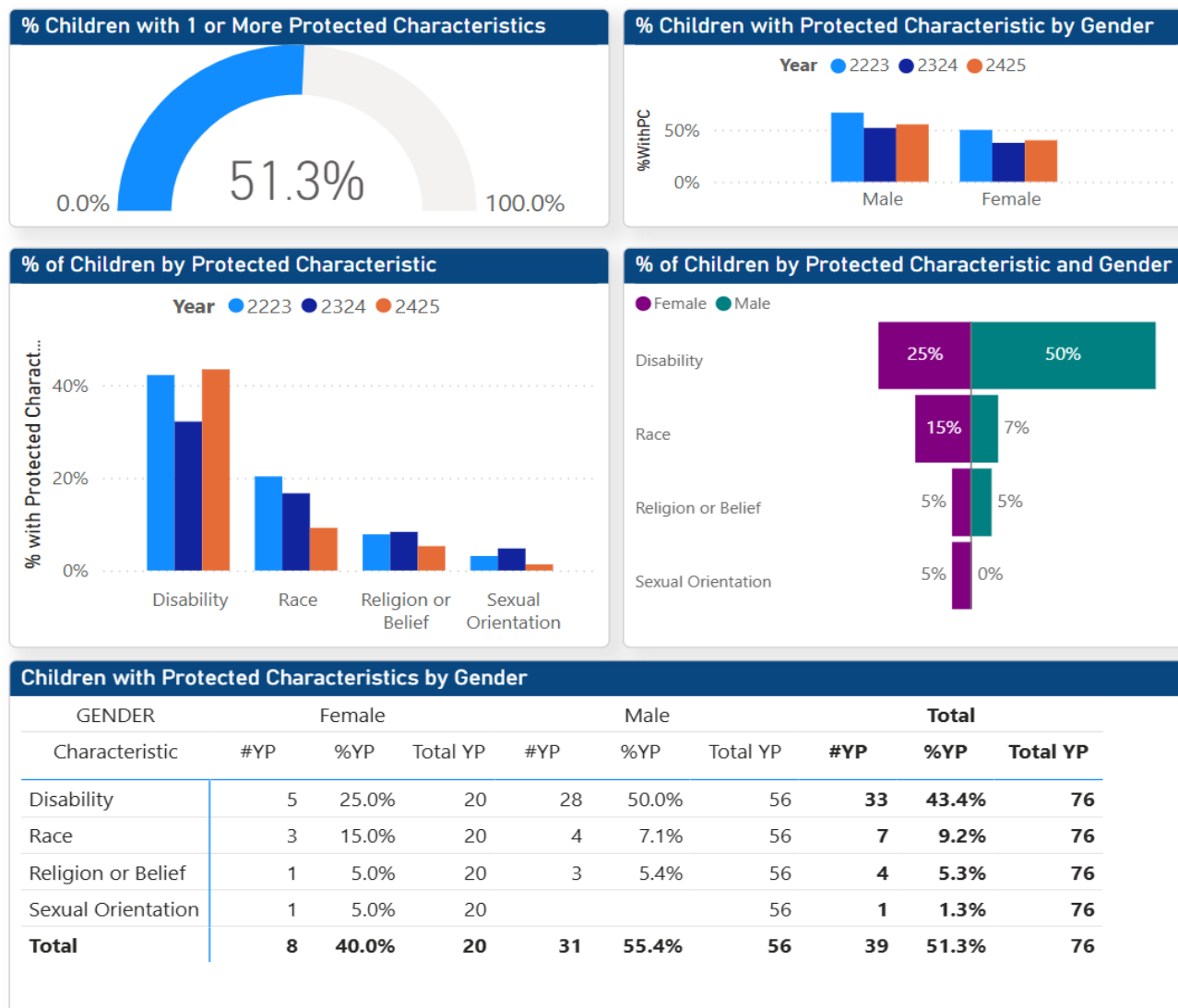
- Expand and evaluate the use of prevention letters through Mini-Maps, and targeted education (e.g., E-bike misuse).
- Increase school-based interventions through the Positive Intervention Programme (PIP).

2. Strengthen Evidence-Based and Reflective Practice

- Support staff in using evidence-based tools (YEF Toolkit, What Works Centre).
 - Promote reflective practice through structured discussions and learning from inspections.
3. Improve Out-of-Court Disposals and Diversion
 - Fully implement and evaluate Youth Deferred Prosecution (YDP).
 - Maintain and strengthen Joint Decision-Making Panels (JDMP) for consistency.
 4. Advance Public Protection and Risk Management
 - Deliver and evaluate responses to violent offences (e.g., “Act Now”).
 - Conduct audits and training to improve risk assessment and MAPPA engagement.
 5. Promote Inclusion, Equity, and Cultural Competence
 - Conduct disproportionality audits and monitor protected characteristics.
 - Deliver culturally competent training to staff and support to underrepresented communities.
 6. Support Education, Training, and Employment Outcomes
 - Strengthen multi-agency approach to reduce exclusions and improve attendance.
 - Broaden engagement through AQA awards and revised safer schools policy.
 7. Embed Health and Wellbeing Support
 - Train staff on trauma, communication needs, and first aid.
 - Evaluate and roll out communication passports.
 8. Elevate Victim Engagement and Restorative Practices
 - Benchmark and audit victim-related practices.
 - Increase feedback from victims and improve initial contact processes.

National Priority areas and KPIs:

Children from group which are over- represented:



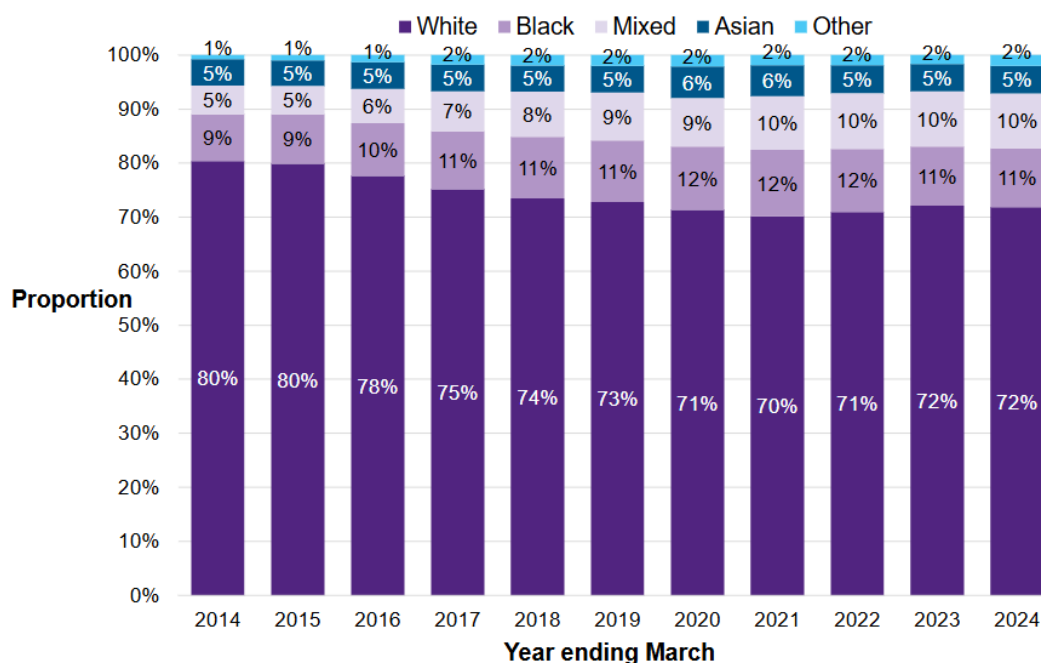
The YJST monitor the caseload of children involved with the YJST in addition to those who have come into contact with the police through other reasons for example stop and search or children who are excluded. Where areas of over representation or disproportionality are identified, the YJST partnership seeks to understand the drivers for this over representation and address those with those who have the power to make changes.

There were 23 children from a GRT/ethnic minority background who committed 32 offences representing 13.8% of the offending population and 13.2% of all offences committed respectively. Of the 32 offences committed, 15.6% resulted in a substantive outcome, compared with 19.9% of offences committed by young people from a white background. In terms of seriousness of offending, 50% of offences committed by children from a GRT/ethnic minority background are categorised with gravity 3 or above compared with 53% for children

from a white background. The annual school census for secondary schools showed that the proportion of GRT/ethnic minority pupils in the general West Berkshire secondary population was 14.6% in 2023. The GRT/ethnic minority population is therefore marginally underrepresented in the youth justice system in West Berkshire.

Statistics produced by the Youth Justice Board show that 28% of **children receiving a caution or sentence** in England and Wales in 2024 were of ethnic minority. This compares to 4.5% of children in West Berkshire in 2024. Of note this uses the Ethnicity 5+1 groupings which classifies children from a GRT background as white. See graph below.

Proportion of children receiving a caution or sentence by ethnicity, England and Wales, years ending March 2014 to 2024



In 2024, 29.9% of children receiving either an informal or substantive outcome locally were female. Of these, 22.7% received a caution or sentence. This is higher than the national average of 15% in 2024, which itself has risen from 14% in 2023—suggesting a national trend of increasing female involvement in the youth justice system.

- In 2024/25, 76 children engaged with an intervention with the Youth Justice Service (YJST). Of these, 39 children (51.3%) were identified as having 1 or more Protected Characteristics. This compares to 46.4% in 2022/23 and 60.9% in 2021/22.
- Males are more likely to be identified as having a Protected Characteristic than females – 55.4% versus 40%
- Disability is the most common Protected Characteristic (43.4%). This has increased from 32.1% in 2022/23 but is a similar level to 2021/22 (42.2%). Boys were twice as

likely as girls to have disability as a Protected Characteristic (50% vs. 25%).

- The proportion of children with race as a protected characteristic has declined from 16.7% to 9.2%. In the current cohort, 15% of girls were identified with this characteristic, compared to 7.1% of boys, reversing the trend of the previous two years.
- 5% of girls were identified with sexual orientation as a Protected Characteristic. No boys in the 2024/25 cohort were identified with this characteristic.

Policing:

West Berkshire YJST sits within the Thames Valley Police (TVP) area, from 7th May 2025 the West Berkshire Local Policing Area (LPA) moved to a Berkshire West Local Command Unit (LCU). The YJ Police Officer will be managed under the newly formed Harm Reduction Unit.

Previously there have been strong links with officers of all ranks within the LPA, such as schools officer, safeguarding police officers with children who are at risk of exploitation, police sergeant within the anti-social behaviour meetings, police inspectors overseeing knife crime and neighbourhood problem solving.

There have been strong partnerships with the Criminal Justice Team which include the Youth Justice Unit – OOCR decision makers and the YJ Police Officer was managed through the CJT and there are regular joint supervisions.

The YJST Service Manager has links with the LCU Chief Inspector and Superintendent who sit as part of the Management Group and Management Board. The Service Manager has wider links through the local criminal justice board and partnership meetings such as OOCR scrutiny panel and Children's Board.

Strengths:

- Strong engagement at LCU and TVP level
- Joint problem-solving approach to individual children and wider issues
- Grant funding by the OPCC to address ASB and prevention of offending
- The Service Manager sits on the LCJB and chairs the LCJB children's board and sits as a YJS manager on the OOCR Scrutiny panel, placing them at a strategic level within the partnership
- Joint OOCR decision making panels have commenced this year creating a robust oversight for decisions

Challenges/risks:

- TVP restructure and moving away from LPA to Local Command Units model – this could impact on the strong local partnership approach with resources covering a larger area, dilution of West Berkshire within a larger policing area
- There is a proposal to reduce the capacity of the YJST full time seconded Police Officer under the LCU arrangement

FTEs per 100,000 10-17 year olds: Outturn Jan 23 – Dec 23 = 146, Outturn Jan 24 – Dec 24 (latest figures) = 79

A first-time entrant (FTE) is a child receiving a formal police or court disposal for the first time, thus entering the youth justice system. A First Time Offender (FTO) is a child who receives either a first informal or substantive outcome within the period.

The YJST in conjunction with the Thames Valley Police introduced a prevention scheme in September 2018 enabling the police to identify young people who displayed behaviour below a criminal threshold but that without support may become a first-time entrant. In addition, a Drug Diversion Scheme was launched in West Berkshire to direct young people caught in possession of illegal drugs to a substance misuse service that can educate, treat and support those young people rather than use the formal criminal justice system.

In terms of national reporting the measure in relation to FTEs is per 100,000 10–17-year-olds. From Q1 2023/24 the MoJ are no longer providing quarterly data updates from PNC. The YJB now derives the FTE data from quarterly case level data YJS submissions.

The most recent measure for January 2024 to December 2024 is 79, a 45.9% decrease from the previous year's outturn. This is significantly lower than the national (160) and regional (142) outturns. There has been a further rise in First time Offenders, increasing by 9.1% from 110 in 2023/2024 to 120 in 2024/2025.

The YJST has undertaken further local analysis of FTEs and FTOs during 2024.

In addition to the key FTE and FTO measures, the quarterly graphs also show a four-quarter moving average. For FTE, this shows no significant spikes over recent quarters with a gradual decline. Conversely, The FTO moving average shows more fluctuation over time, stabilising in recent quarters, although with a gradual upturn.

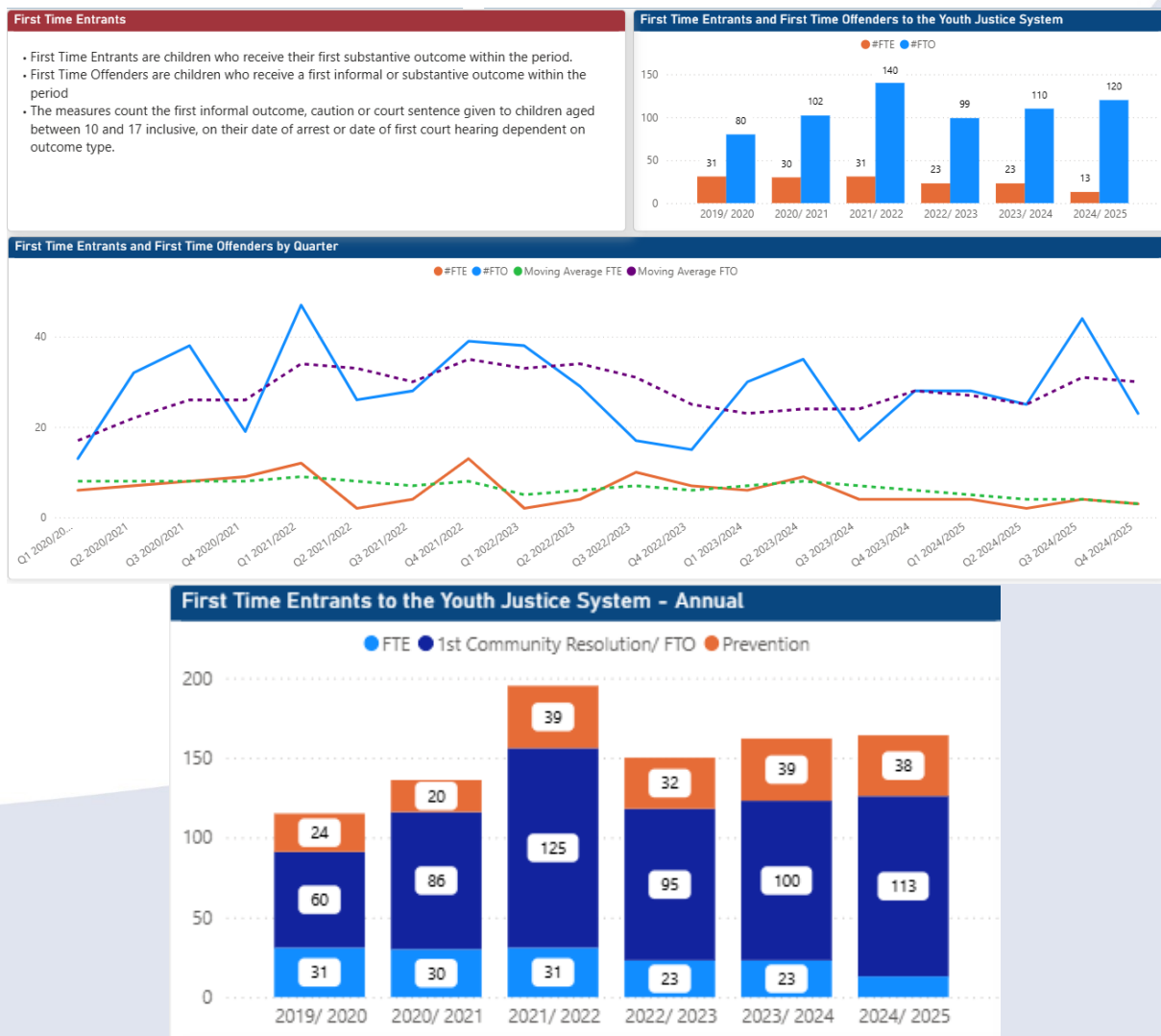
FTE (First Time Entrants)

- In 2024/25 there were 13 FTEs, a reduction of 43.5% from the previous reporting period. Of these, 46.2% had previously received an informal outcome, compared to 56.5% in 2023
- 11 of the 13 FTEs (84.6%) received an out-of-court disposal in the form of a Youth Caution or Youth Conditional Caution and 2 children received a Referral Order.
- The peak age for becoming an FTE has declined from 15-16 to 14 for the current cohort and this is representative of both boys and girls.
- 23.1% of children are from a GRT/ethnic minority background, compared with 17.4% in 2023. However, the number of children has decreased from 4 to 3.
- The cohort records the lowest number of girls (1) in recent reporting years with boys now representing 92% of the cohort.

- Violence continues to be the main offence type for which a young person becomes an FTE representing 47.6% of all FTE offences. There has been an increase in children becoming an FTE due to drugs offences, with 3 children committing 6 offences and all receiving an out-of-court disposal.

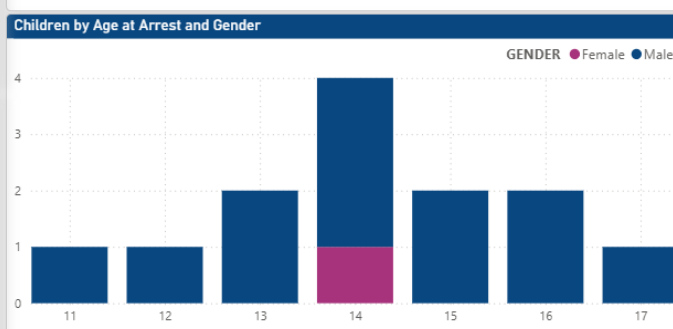
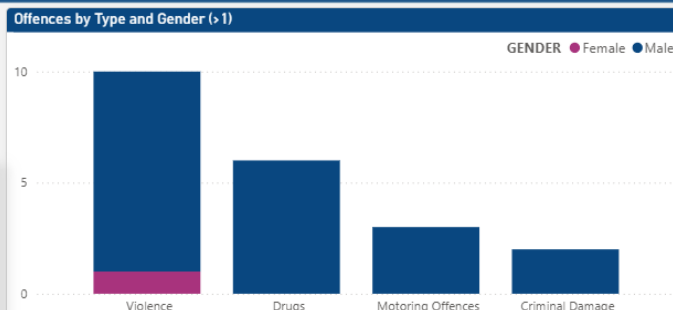
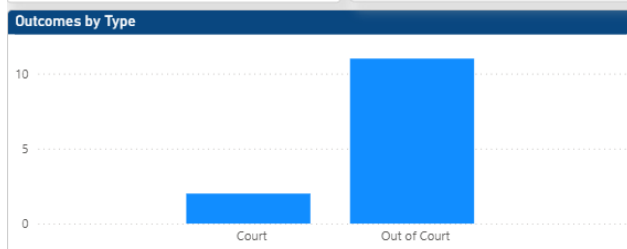
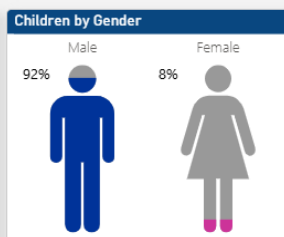
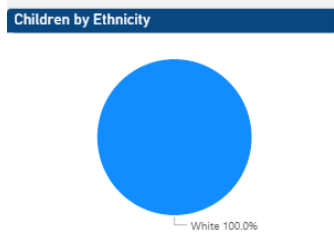
FTO (First Time Offenders)

- In 2024/25, there were 120 FTOs, an increase of 9.1% from the previous period.
- Compared to FTEs, a higher proportion of young people receiving a first outcome are girls (26.7%) although this has declined from 37.3% in 2023/24.
- The highest proportion of FTOs are in the 14/15 age band (40.8%). For girls, the peak age is 15 (28.1%) and for boys the peak is 14 (22.7%)
- The FTO cohort sees an increase in the proportion of children from a GRT/ethnic minority background from 6.4% in 2023/2024 to 16.7% in the current period
- Violence and drugs are the most prevalent offences overall and for boys while girls are more likely to become an FTO for offences of violence, drugs and theft and handling.



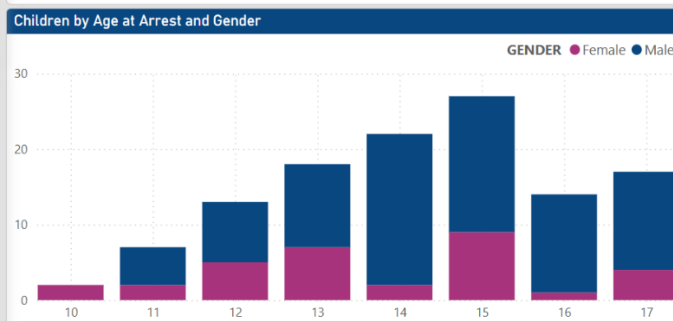
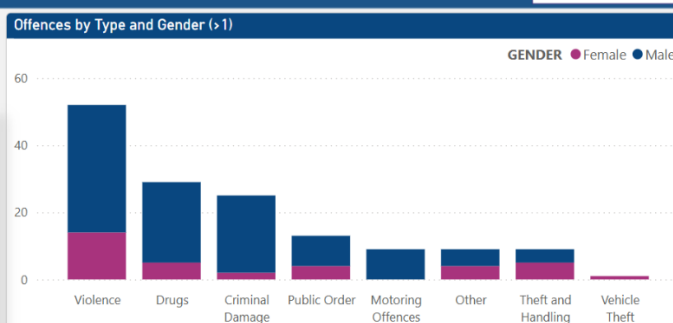
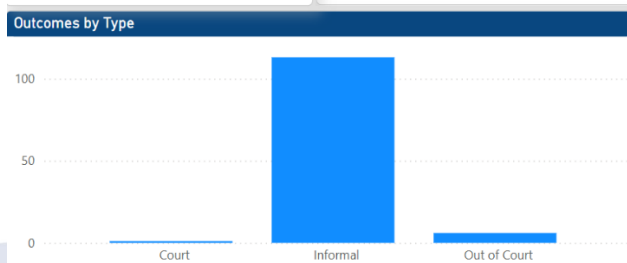
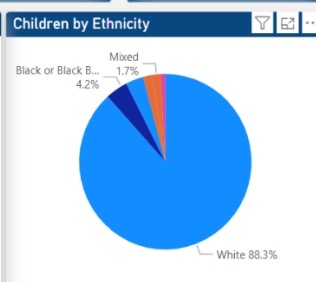
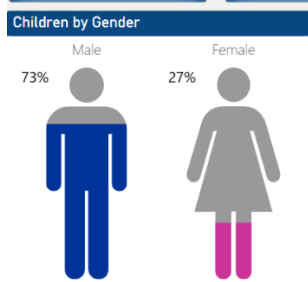
FTE Overview - 2024/25

# Children	# Outcomes	Prev CR	# Offences
13	13	6	21



FTO Overview - 2024/25

# Children	# Outcomes	# Offences
120	120	147



Prevention:

The YJST have worked in partnership with other agencies to prevent children entering the youth justice system. Where Thames Valley Police identify children behaving in an anti-social manner which and has the potential to escalate into the criminal space, they write a

'prevention letter' to the parents outlining the specific behaviour that is causing concern, which is hand delivered and explaining that they will be notifying the YJST who will be in contact. The letter is also sent to the YJST who allocate a worker to undertake a home visit. During the visit the YJST worker undertakes a brief assessment with the view to delivering an intervention. In 2024/2025 there were 40 prevention letters issued, with 8 successful interventions taking place and 3 open at the time of this plan.

The YJST also work in partnership with secondary schools and the TVP safeguarding team delivering the Positive intervention Programme (PiP) aimed at working with students who have committed offences in school but are not being formally processed through the criminal justice system, or there are behavioural concerns identified, and exclusion maybe considered. When a pupil is referred, they are allocated a worker either in the Police Safeguarding Team or YJST who will undertake one to one work within the school setting to address the presenting behaviour and support them with their education. In 2024/2025 there were 44 children referred to PIP along with a group work session. 3 children did not engage, and 2 children were not offered a service following review of the information. 84.5% did not go on to offend. In relation to exclusions one child was permanently excluded and one child moved to another after PiP involvement.

Turnaround:

The YJST received Turnaround grant funding from the MoJ in December 2022 for a three-year project to provide early help style voluntary assessments and intervention to children - offering voluntary, needs driven, family focused support to children to de-escalate their behaviour and get their lives back on track. Since the commencement of this grant we have offered children early engagement with support at the point of arrest, having been released under investigation or released on conditional bail. There is a referral route from children service when police have attended the home and taken no further action. Our target number of children to successfully complete interventions were 36; we completed 41 interventions with 3 children going on to reoffend receiving formal outcomes within 12 months of closure.

Act Now:

Act Now is a one year PCC funded project to address serious violence. A Youth Worker will response to children in police custody within 90 minutes of the call and the service runs 7 days per week from 9am-10pm. It has been recognised that intensive and speedy intervention can help children to move away from / address problematic areas of their lives. Act Now will offer earlier intervention to children, providing an opportunity for them to reduce or avoid involvement in the criminal justice system. YJST will supply data to the OPCC and support the evaluation of the pilot.

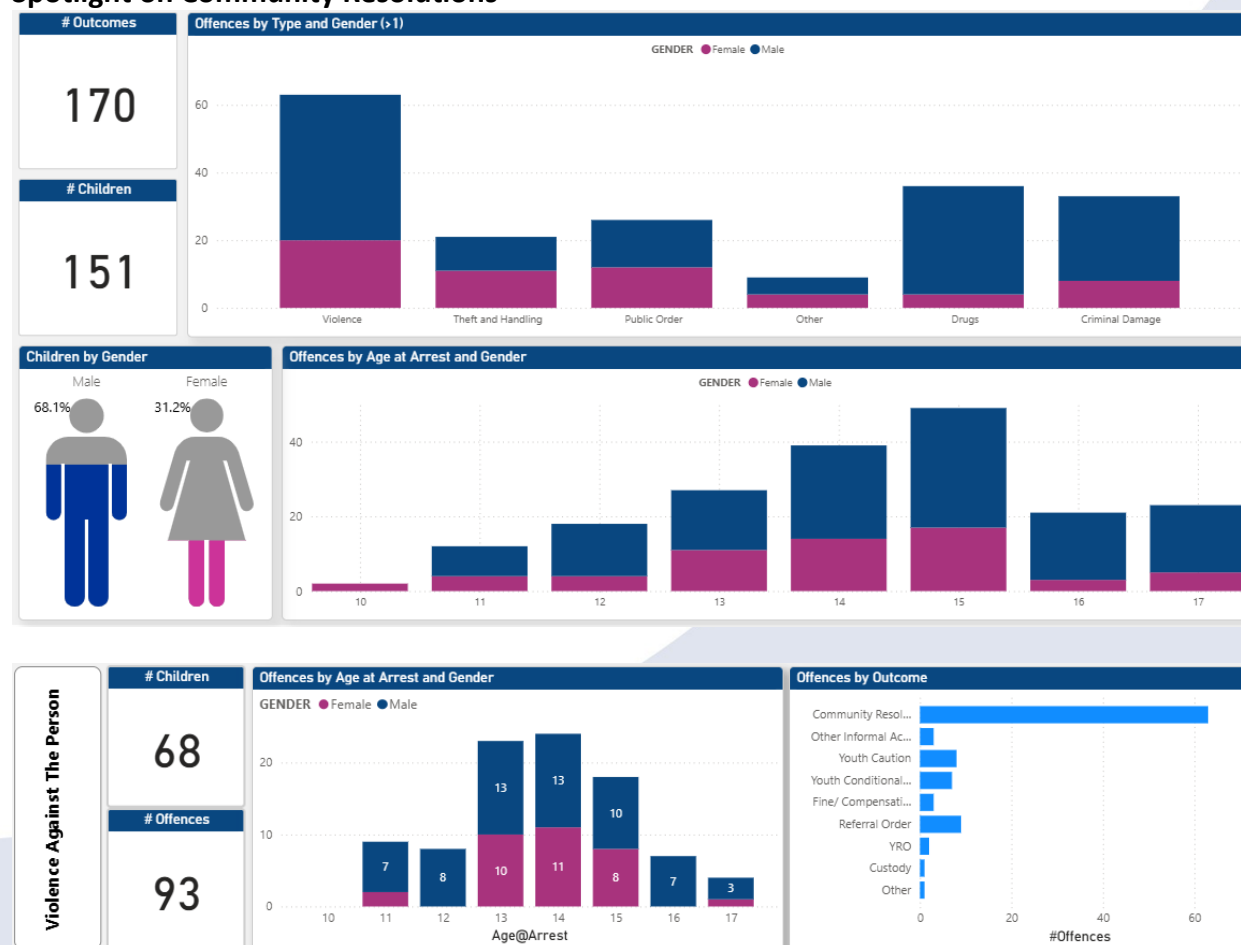
Diversion:

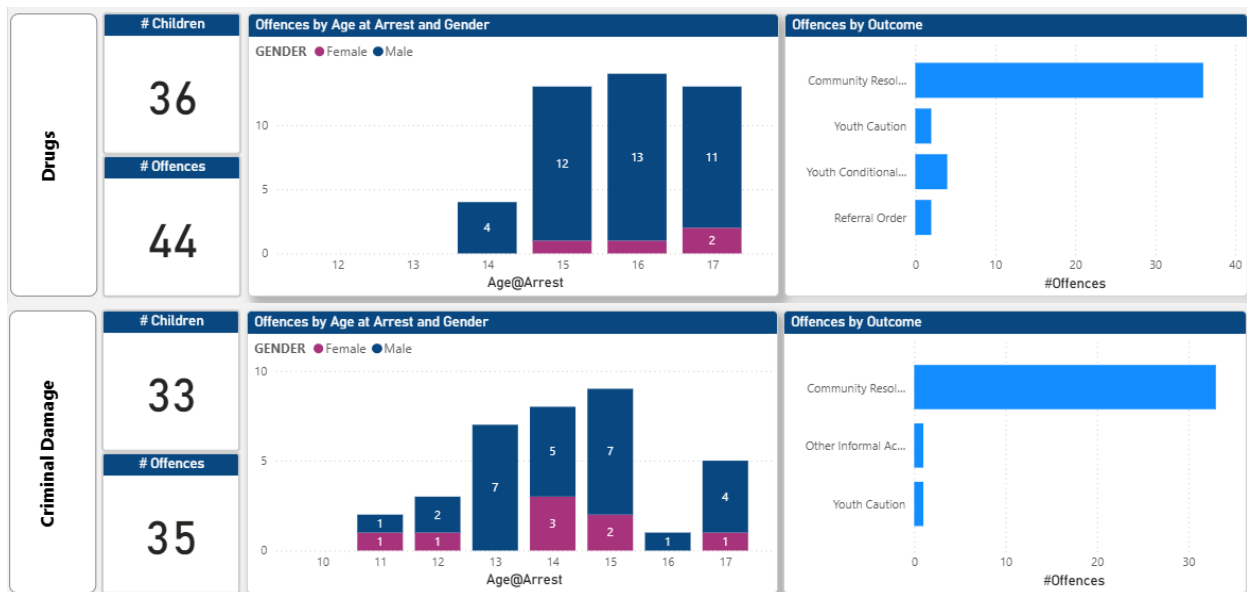
Thames Valley Police use Community Resolutions as an informal disposal diverting children away from the formal criminal justice system. It is primarily used by officers on the street dealing with low level offending. Officers check their data systems to ascertain if a child has

been subject to a previous disposal, it can be given to children and young people who have had no previous contact with the criminal justice system. If a previous Community Resolution has been given, then the decision is deferred to be made between the TVP Youth Justice Unit and the YJST through joint decision-making panel. West Berkshire YJST should be notified of all Community Resolutions and triage them all to consider voluntary intervention. 172 Community Resolutions (CR) and 35 Drugs Diversion were issued between April 2024 and March 2025. 111 offered YJST intervention of which 55 (50%) accepted the service, this is a slight increase since last year. Children receiving a drugs diversion are referred to the Edge, substance misuse service for six sessions of education and harm minimisation, 43% engaged in this intervention.

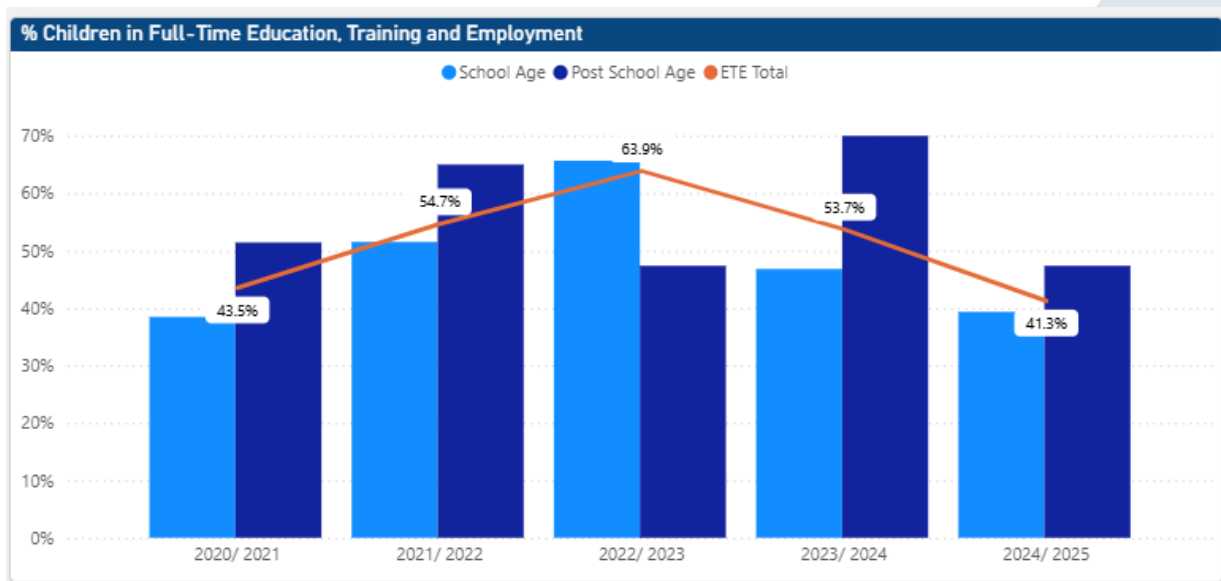
The YJST Manager sits on the Thames Valley Out of Court Scrutiny Panel which has oversight of all the out of court resolutions. The YJST Senior Social Worker acts as YJST decision maker and she has presented examples of West Berkshire joint decisions at the scrutiny panel.

Spotlight on Community Resolutions





Education:



29.2% of children completing a substantive intervention were in full time education or employment at the end of their order. This increases to 41.3% when including informal interventions.

The YJST continues to maintain a priority focus on supporting children to access and maintain fulltime ETE. Termly problem-solving meetings are held with colleagues from different educational establishments and those with oversight of the system, identifying solutions to increase attendance and attachment with education. The YJ Teacher receives daily exclusions

reports and works closely with the Education Attendance Officers and Exclusions Officer to identify early support if necessary.

YJST report on the number of hours offered and accessed, as well as whether there has been any improvement or deterioration during the course of the intervention, this enables the YJ Management Group to have an informed overview of YJST performance and address strategic issues or blockages.

The Prevention Intervention Programme (PIP) is now embedded within schools. There have been good links made with key leaders within schools to promote this approach and information is sent regularly to ensure schools remain aware of the support on offer. The teacher has positive partnership links with a range of professionals offering support in schools including, Youth Workers, virtual school, targeted sports and mental health support workers. There is good communication to ensure there is not duplication in services being offered to children within schools.

The YJST is a centre for AQAs, providing the opportunity for children to gain certificate of achievements where relevant and beneficial. This year five children were awarded AQA awards.

Restorative Justice and Victims:

West Berkshire YJST recognises the importance of providing a high-quality service to victims of youth crime. The YJST Restorative Justice and Volunteer Coordinator (RJVC) strives to achieve this by working with victims delivering restorative justice practices and reparation. Restorative Justice is a standard agenda item on the fortnightly team meeting; this allows for regular briefings and updates to all staff about RJ and victim work. Part of the RJVC role is to co-ordinate the volunteers, offering support and training opportunities, ensuring continued involvement with the YJST and participation in Referral Order panel meetings process.

The YJST will continue to offer direct support to victims of youth crime. This may include gaining an impact statement which can be incorporated during victim awareness sessions with children that have caused the harm, a letter of explanation (where appropriate), shuttle mediation between the victim and children, preparing and facilitating face-to-face restorative meetings, one-to-one intervention sessions covering protective behaviours and keeping safe (when under the age of 18) and regular updates to the victim on the progress of the children. After the victim's case has been closed they may be sign posted or referred to other services for example; SAFE- who support young victims of crime and Help After Harm- for all victims of crime. A closing letter summarising the support offered / received is also sent, along with a feedback form. After annually reviewing the process of initial contact, we are continuing initial contact via letter, which includes a YJST victim leaflet and the victim codes of practice handout. The victim will then be contacted via the telephone a week after the letter has been sent. This continued practice seems to have so far been successful as a higher number of victims are more responsive to telephone calls. An audit of victim cases is undertaken annually to evaluate the effectiveness of communication.

This annual audit focused on the period of January 2024 to January 2025. During this period the YJST received 163 YOT1's with an offence that had an identified victim, 59 provided consent for the YJST to make contact. The VLO attempted contact with all victims. Despite numerous attempts 26 victims did not respond to the initial letter or subsequent telephone calls so their cases were closed. 13 victims were happy with the contact made by YJST but did not want any ongoing support. 2 received letters of explanation only. These figures show an increased number of YOT1's were received, however the police received a decreased number of victims providing consent.

Referral Orders:

Referral Orders are supported by trained volunteers who chair the panels in a restorative manner. Two panel members work together with the child and parent/carer and the YJST Officer to get to know the child and agree a contract of intervention to be carried out during the length of the Referral Order. At each panel meeting feedback is gained from the panel members and the child, this feedback is used to inform future panel member training events and improve services to children, collated feedback is detailed below.

Total number of RO starting April 2024	5			
Initial Panels	Review	Breach	Extension	Final
5	4	0	2	0

Panel members:

- All feel they have enough time during the pre-meet to discuss actions and are confident to ask for more if needed.
- All feel their interactions with the other panel members, child and parents were good. One parent did require support to understand the panel process and the work that will be carried out with their child.
- All feel they are now adopting a more child first approach.
- All feel they are getting to know the child better and have noticed their engagement improve during the review panels.

Children:

- All panel members introduced themselves and explained the expectations of the meeting.
- All children felt they were given the opportunity to speak.
- All children felt they were listened to and heard by the panel members

Serious Youth Violence, exploitation and contextual safeguarding:

It is important to recognise that the national KPI measure is different from the Thames Valley Police area agreed definition and data collection. During 2024-25 there were four children who committed six offences of Robbery, Violence against the person and Drugs supply. There

were a range of outcomes from Community Resolution, Youth Condition Caution and Court Orders. One child breached their Court Order several times and was resentenced for the original offence to a Detention and Training Order. No child was overseen by MAPPA for these offences.



The AssetPlus/PDAT assessments are used to assess the risk of that children present to others reducing this risk is a focus of the work the YJST undertakes with partners and children. For all children who present high or very high risk safety concern for others are overseen by the Operational Manager at monthly multi-agency case planning forums.

The AssetPlus/PDAT also assesses for vulnerability to the child through the Safety and Wellbeing assessment. As part of the assessment sexual and criminal exploitation is assessed. For all children where concerns are highlighted a screening tool is completed with them and submitted to EMRAC (Exploitation, Missing Risk Assessment Conference) via the Operational Manager.

There is mandatory requirement to report all serious incidents to the YJB who meet the specific requirements, YJS are then required to consider critical learning reviews to examine the circumstances surrounding the offence and any opportunities that the YJS had to intervene earlier. West Berkshire have not had any children meet this threshold and no reviews took place this year.

Children involved in the Youth Justice System have experienced higher levels of childhood trauma and adversity than many other in the community, see profile on pages 5-7. Research around the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) supports a relationship-based trauma informed approach to the work undertaken with them. Safeguarding children is a crucial role of the YJST and this is assessed through AssetPlus/PDAT assessments.

The YJST is represented on the Thames Valley wide Violence Prevention Partnership (VPP) Board by the Head of Youth Offending Service for Oxfordshire, who represents all Thames Valley YJS's at this forum. The YJST is committed to being active partners in the delivery of the

Serious Violence duty alongside the VPP in Thames Valley. The YJST is an active member of the Serious Violence Steering group working with the Community Safety Partnership to implement the local requirements of the SV Duty. The YJST remains engaged with TVP and partners to address knife crime and serious violence attending the fortnightly meetings to ensure services are provided early.

The YJST remains an active member in a number of partnership meetings, the Operational Manager attends EMRAC (exploitation, missing and risk assessment conference), TTCG (police led) and Mini-Maps (ASB), Knife crime and serious violence meeting, with attendance at all meetings. This enables the YJST to share intelligence with colleagues and direct resources at emerging issues that impact on public safety. The YJ Police Officer continues to support the provision of a high volume of intelligence. The YJ Police Officer reviews any notifications triggered by an alert system set up for all open YJST children and the LPA daily briefing, he alerts the Operational Manager so issues can be addressed in a timely fashion. The Operational Manager attends the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) meetings and ensures information is shared regarding children turning 18 years old.

There remains a focus from the YJST Operational Manager to ensure all members of the team are trained in safeguarding, Child Exploitation, Prevent and County Lines. The Service Manager is the co-chair of Exploitation and Missing Risk Assessment Conference (EMRAC) panel and the YJST Operational manager attends to facilitate the information sharing in relation to children working with YJST. The YJST are members of the Channel Panel, one child has been overseen by Channel and one child is currently being assessed. Over the past year the YJST has attended all the relevant Child Protection Initial and Review conferences.

Detention in Police Custody:

Thames Valley Police lead on Children in Custody meeting and chaired by the Chief Inspector responsible for the TVP custody suite and is undertaken bi-monthly. Membership includes a Milton Keynes YJ data lead, Youth Justice Manager, Chief Inspection Crime Manager, Custody Inspector, Criminal Justice and Custody Strategy Sergeant, out of hours (EDT) team managers from across TV, and the appropriate adult coordinator for Berkshire. This meeting sets out to review all children who have entered one of the custody suites, reviews individual decisions on detention, remand or release and sets to identify any patterns. This also has a focus for reviewing section 38(6) of PACE 1984 to ensure the procedure is followed. Actions are set and follow up for individual cases and learning is disseminated and use to improve practice and outcomes.

West Berkshire YJST has a duty system of trained staff to provide appropriate adult services during office hours and has support from the Emergency Duty Team out of hours. The YJST Manager and Police Officer provides training for both internal and external staff (including independent children's homes in the area) to ensure there is consistent knowledge to keep children safe in custody. The YJST appropriate adult guidance is updated every three years or when there is a policy change.

Use of custody and constructive resettlement (including remand):

There has been one custodial sentence to Youth Detention Accommodation (YDA) during this past year and no remands. The data published by the Youth Justice Board uses a custody rate per 1,000 10-17 year olds in West Berkshire. With one custodial sentence given during the period the outturn for Jan 2024 – Dec 2024 is 0.06. This compares to a regional rate of 0.06 and a national rate of 0.10.

	2014 - 2015	2015- 2016	2016- 2017	2017- 2018	2019- 2020	2020- 2021	2021- 2022	2022- 2023	2023- 2024	2024- 2025
Total number of custodial sentences	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1

One child received a Youth Rehabilitation Order with Intensive Supervision and Surveillance requirement. There is not a dedicated ISS team to facilitate or manage these interventions and this falls to the YJ Officers with support from the whole team to ensure up to 25 hours per week, including weekend contacts, are covered. This child had a significant amount of breaches and received a stand-alone Court Order, however after 7 months there was no other option than a Detention and Training Order. He was resentenced for previous serious violent offences and breach of Community Orders, serving the first three months in custody. During this period there was good engagement in education achieving English and Maths qualifications, interventions took place with the YJST which supported an identity shift. This child successfully completed his DTO without any further breach or offending.

Working with families:

All YJST team members receive a wider range of training opportunities, this includes child to parent violence. We have professionals with additional parenting training, STOP and Who's in Charge (WiC) enabling us to support parents individually and in groups. During this year 29 parents successfully engaged with the WiC group, which is an 8 week programme run during each school term.

The Supporting Families service was within the YJST Service Managers portfolio, therefore providing a good link across services. The Supporting Families Parenting Worker was hosted at the YJST enabling joint work with families. The YJST Assistant Team Manager also sat within the virtual Supporting Families team and has access to the range of professionals who support families, such as the DWP employment advisor and housing officers. The Supporting Families programme ended in March 2024 and we look forward to working alongside colleagues as new provision is created.

Priorities for 2025-26

The team's priorities are outlined in the following action plan.

First Time Entrants – Prevention and Diversion

Outcome sought	Action	By Whom	By When
A reduction in the number of children causing ASB through their use of E-scooters and E-bikes	YJ Police officer to deliver targeted information and education to children who are identified as using E-bike and E-scooters antisocially with the Thatcham area.	YJ Police Officer	July 2025
An effective and evidence based scheme for reducing ASB and offending among children	Evaluate the effectiveness of the prevention letter scheme and refine the approach based on outcomes and feedback.	Operational Manager	October 2025
A reduction in the number of children coming to the attention of the police for offending at school.	Increase school-based interventions through the Positive Intervention Programme (PIP) for children offending in a school setting	YJ Teacher/ YJ Police Officer	December 2025
Reduce the number of children entering the criminal justice system by promoting a childhood away from the justice system	Fully implement and evaluate the use of Youth Deferred Prosecution YDP (Outcome 22) including data collection and feedback loops.	TVP and YJ Manager	March 2026
Support the reduction in criminalisation of children by reducing first time entrants	Maintain and strengthen the Joint Decision-Making Panels (JDMP) to ensure fair and consistent out-of-court decisions through embedding new guidance and facilitating practice observation and reflection.	Operational Manager/ Senior Social Worker	July 2025 February 2026
Drug diversion work delivered is effective at engaging with children	Undertake an evaluation of the drug diversion work presented to the YJ Management Group	The Edge	December 2025

Reducing reoffending - enhancing life choices

Outcome sought	Action	By Whom	By When
Interventions with children are effective and make a difference.	Support YJ staff to use evaluated evidence based practice through the YEF toolkit, YJB Resources Hub and What Works Centre.	Operational Manager & ATM	6 monthly review
Bespoke offence specific interventions are effective at changing behaviour	Pilot and evaluate the use of the Virtual Reality Headsets when addressing specific behaviours.	SYV Coordinator	March 2026
PDAT are effective assessments leading to greater insight for children and parents into their behaviour	Evaluate the learning from HMIP inspections covering PDAT and the learning derived from sharing assessments with any learning shaping practice development	Operational Manager and ATM	As reports are published
Turnaround scheme is effective at reducing reoffending	YJ Information Officer to be involved in the national impact evaluation of Turnaround	Information officer and MOJ	October 2025
YJS requirement for the provision of Appropriate Adults is suitable and meets high standards	Monitor and report on the use of Appropriate Adults and any use of PACE 1984 Section 38(6) transfers	Service Manager	March 2026

Public Protection and violence prevention

Outcome sought	Action	By Whom	By When
Meet the requirements of the Serious Violence Duty and reduce serious violence among children	Collaborate with the BCT and OPCC in the development of Prevention partnership and Young Futures Prevention Hub	BCT, YJ Managers and SV Coordinator	Review each quarter
Ensure that the assessment and management of risk is of high quality and protects the public	Undertake an audit addressing the assessment and management of risk, reporting findings to the YJST Management Group	Operational Manager	December 2025
MAPPA arrangements locally provide effective oversight of MAPPA nominals	YJ Case managers to attend bespoke MAPPA training addressing children and MAPPA	YJST Staff	July 25

Safeguarding, vulnerabilities and well being

Outcome sought	Action	By Whom	By When
All children to have access and information about leisure activities and support services to increase wellbeing.	Update the positive activities booklet and promote those activities among young people.	YJST Case managers	May 2025
Children on the cusp of the justice system are supported through an Early Help offer	YJST to be involved in the development of the Early Help and Family Help offer to ensure that children in the justice system are supported	Service Manager	October 2025
Ensure that the assessment and management of safety and wellbeing is of high quality and protects the public	Undertake an audit addressing the assessment and management of safety and wellbeing, reporting findings to the YJST Management Group	Operational Manager	December 2025

Education, training and employment

Outcome sought	Action	By Whom	By When
Reduce the numbers of children suspended from school	Promote the use of the Positive Intervention Programme (PIP) as a means of reducing suspension and for pupils at risk at the various West Berkshire education forums	YJST Teacher and TVP Schools P Officer	Bi-monthly
Increase attendance at school thus reducing the likelihood of offending	Support Education Attendance Team in seeking to increase attendance of severely absent pupils	YJ Officers	Throughout year
Increase the recognition of children on their achievements.	Broaden the use of AQA and creative awards to engage children not in full-time education and promote prosocial identity.	YJST Teacher	Termly
Children receive fewer suspensions and reduced timetables.	Strengthen the multi-agency education panel to address persistent absence, educational packages and	YJST Teacher/ Operational Manager	Termly

	exclusions among YJST involved children		
Children engage with learning opportunities	Collaborate with Berkshire Youth to identify and support children struggling in a school setting reducing suspension and increasing engagement	Operational Manager, YJST Teacher, Berkshire Youth	Termly

Health

Outcome sought	Action	By Whom	By When
Children are better able to engage in verbally mediated interventions.	Staff training on specific techniques to support children in sessions with particular focus on speech, language and communication	Speech and Language Therapist	September 2025
Volunteers have increased understanding of the use of communication passports	Communication passports training is delivered to all YJ volunteers	Speech and Language Therapist	December 2025
Communication passports are used effectively to support children's engagement and participation	Continue to roll out and evaluate the use of communication passports and tools for children with speech and language needs	Speech and Language Therapist	July 2025
Children are equipped to respond when first aid is required	Deliver basic First Aid training as a first responder to children	YJST Nurse/ YJ Police Officer	School holidays and quarterly term time
YJST to work with children in a trauma informed manner	Staff refresher training on the Trauma Recovery Model to be delivered	Mental Health Worker	January 2026

Strengths based approach

Outcome sought	Action	By Whom	By When
YJST practice is continually developing and improving	Review and benchmark YJST Practice against recently published research and thematic inspection findings	YJST Managers	When reports are published

YJ Volunteers understanding and knowledge of Child first principles are enhanced	Child first training is delivered for volunteers	Assistant Team Manager	July 2025
YJST practice is continually developing and improving through the use of feedback	Annual feedback report to the Management Group to consider changes to service provision.	Service Manager	January 2026
Parents are supported and equipped to parent their children	Expand access to parenting programmes like “Who’s in Charge” and STOP parenting.	Parenting workers	April 2025 September 2025 January 2026
Children engage in prosocial activities reducing the likelihood of offending	Promote community-based diversion activities during school holidays to reduce idle time and risk of offending.	YJ Officers	School holidays
Children in the justice system receive recognition for their achievements	Create an exhibition of children’s work in collaboration with local arts space	YJST Teacher and victim worker	March 2026

Responding to cohort – diversity and disproportionality

Outcome sought	Action	By Whom	By When
Female children avoid over criminalisation and do well in West Berkshire.	Deliver training for Thames Valley Police around responding to female aggression and violence	Assistant Team Manager/YJ Police Officer	October 2025
YJST staff are culturally competent when working with children from diverse communities	Develop culturally competent training for staff to better support children from GRT and ethnic minority backgrounds	Diversity Champion/ Operational Manager	January 2026
YJST delivers targeted work in light of the cohort of children that are open.	Conduct regular disproportionality audits to identify over-represented groups and inform targeted interventions	Information Officer	6 monthly
Building on and maintaining positive relationships with our Gypsy Roma Traveller	Provide support and outreach to Gypsy Roma Traveller communities via EMTAS which includes	Assistant Team Manager	November 2025

families so they can access support	appropriate adult information		
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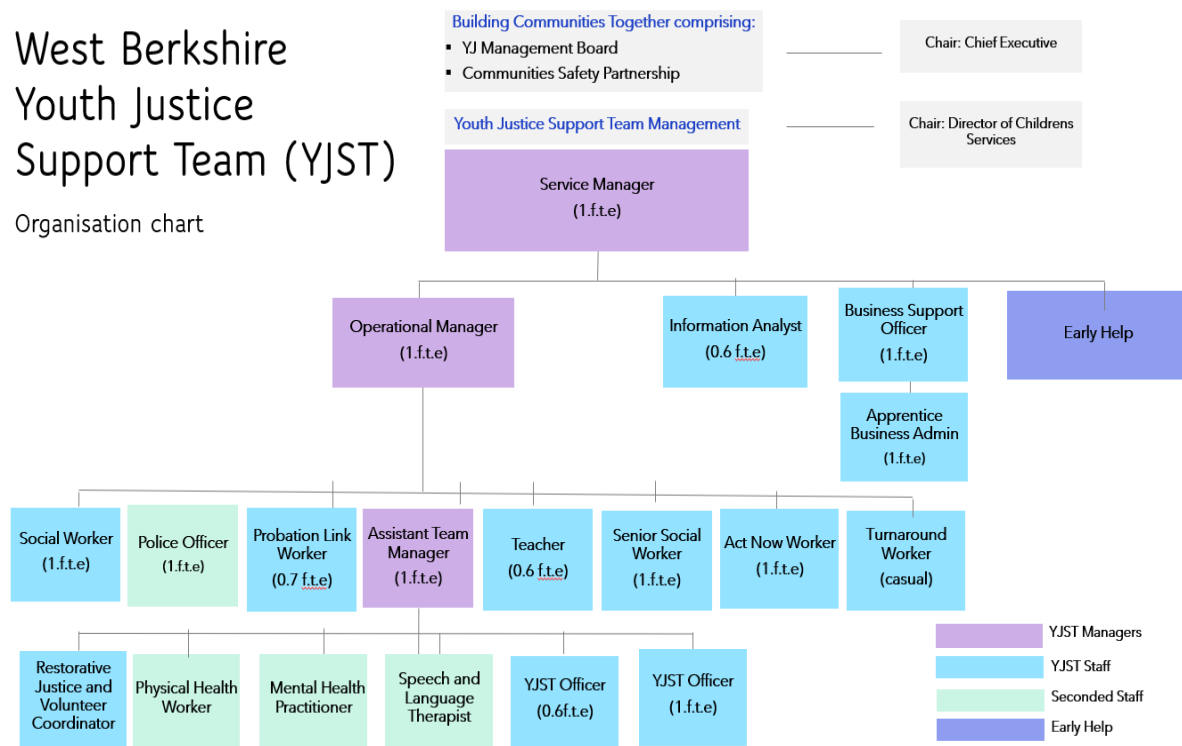
Victims and restorative approaches

Outcome sought	Action	By Whom	By When
Victim of crime work is of the highest quality	Benchmark YJST victim practice against national HMIP inspection findings	Victim Worker and ATM	As reports are published
The views, needs and concerns of victims of crime are appropriately captured in PDAT assessments	Undertake a Dip Audit on victim elements of PDAT assessments to address any quality issues.	Victim Worker	Monthly
Increase victim engagement from initial contact	Work with TVP to review initial victim contact prior to decision making to increase victim engagement and satisfaction with the support on offer.	Victim Worker, JDMP and Assistant Team Manager	February 2026
Support offered to victim of crime is of a high quality	Undertake and audit of restorative justice practices to identify quality and victim satisfaction.	Assistant Team Manager	January 2026
The YJ Management Group have clear oversight of victim work and drive the agenda for victim support	Increase the awareness, scrutiny and oversight of the YJ Management Group through greater visibility of victim work and relevant issues.	Service Manager and Victim Worker	October 2025

Appendix One:

West Berkshire Youth Justice Support Team (YJST)

Organisation chart



The YJST consists of 15 female staff and 2 male staff. 16 White British, 3 members of staff have disabilities.

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Children, Family and Education Annual Complaints and Compliments Report 2024/2025

Committee considering report:	Scrutiny Commission
Date of Committee:	11 September 2025
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Heather Codling
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	19 June 2025
Report Author:	Sue O'Brien

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This is the Children's Services Annual Complaints and Compliments Report for 2024-2025.
- 1.2 The purpose of the report is to ensure transparency and accountability. It is a summary of the previous year's complaints and compliments. It provides detailed information about the types of complaints and what the service has learnt from them and changes implemented to improve the journey for families and young people.
- 1.3 The report also includes a summary of what actions were completed from the previous report and new actions for the coming year.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 This annual report to inform members around this area and enable confidence in the process of responding as well as learning for the services.
- 2.2 Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to approve and sign off this Annual Report on Children's Services Complaints and Compliments for 2024-2025.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	There are no financial implications with this annual report.

	However, there is a financial consequence from complaints, the LGSCO ask the LA to consider financial remedies at earlier stages in line with their guidance.			
Human Resource:	There are no HR implications with this annual report.			
Legal:	There are no Legal implications with this annual report.			
Risk Management:	There are no Risk Management implications with this annual report.			
Property:	There are no Property implications with this annual report.			
Policy:	Children, Family and Education Complaints policy			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		x		This is an annual report, there is no proposed decision being asked.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		x		
Environmental Impact:		x		

Health Impact:		x		
ICT Impact:		x		
Digital Services Impact:		x		
Council Strategy Priorities:		x		
Core Business:		x		
Data Impact:		x		
Consultation and Engagement:	Services, Management Team			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 2024-2025 Complaints and Compliments Annual Report. At the end of each financial year, there is a requirement to produce an annual report (Regulation 13(3)) and this report must be made available to the general public.
- 4.2 This report provides an overview of complaints received by Children, family and Education Services between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025. This includes Social Care Complaints (statutory complaints) as well as wider Children and Education Services complaints (non-statutory complaints).
- 4.3 This year is the first year that we have combined the report to include whole of Children's Services, previously Children's Social Care was a stand along annual report.
- 4.4 This report explores the themes from the complaints received, as well as volumes, response times and outcomes. This report also covers positive feedback and compliments received.
- 4.5 The report has been designed to show both the quantitative and qualitative information gathered during the complaint process. Highlighting where changes have been made to processes or in the way we consider complaints and who is making them.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.1 Listening to and learning from complaints is an important part of ensuring that the voices of children, young people and families are always heard, and that we continue to deliver high-quality services that are responsive to feedback.
- 5.2 This report provides an overview of complaints received by Children, family and Education Services between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025. This includes Social Care Complaints (statutory complaints) as well as wider Children and Education Services complaints (non-statutory complaints).
- 5.3 This year is the first year that we have combined the report to include all the information.
- 5.4 This report explores the themes from the complaints received, as well as volumes, response times and outcomes. This report also covers positive feedback and compliments received.
- 5.5 We produce this report annually as a statutory requirement for West Berkshire Council.

5.1 Annual Report is at appendix 1

Background

- 5.2 Generally, assessments and services in the following areas can be considered under the statutory complaints' procedure
 - Children in need.
 - Children in Care.
 - Special Guardianship support.
 - Post-adoption support.
- 5.3 The statutory process consists of three stages:
 - **Stage 1:** 10 working days, however this may take 20 working days in complex cases. This will be passed to an appropriate manager in the service that the complaint relates to for a response.
 - **Stage 2:** An independent investigation using an external independent person and investigating Officer. Time frame between 25 – 65 working days
 - **Stage 3:** Review Panel hearing with three independent people on the panel and their decision will be confirmed in writing to you within 28 days of the panel hearing.

6 Other options considered

No other options considered - this is an annual report.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 The report highlights the effectiveness of the complaints procedure and provides evidence that complaints are being managed more effectively, with better timeliness and with compassion.
- 7.2 It provides information about the actual monetary cost of complaints.
- 7.3 The report is an opportunity to reflect on the whole service going forward, we will be able to monitor our process and see where we are making significant gains and where we will need to focus our efforts on making improvements.

8 Appendices

Appendix A - Complaints and Compliments Annual Report

Background Papers:

None

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐ No: ☒

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Item is Urgent Key Decision | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Report is to note only | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Wards affected: All wards

Officer details:

Name: Sue O'Brien
Job Title: Complaints Manager

Tel No:

*(add text)

E-mail:

*(add text)

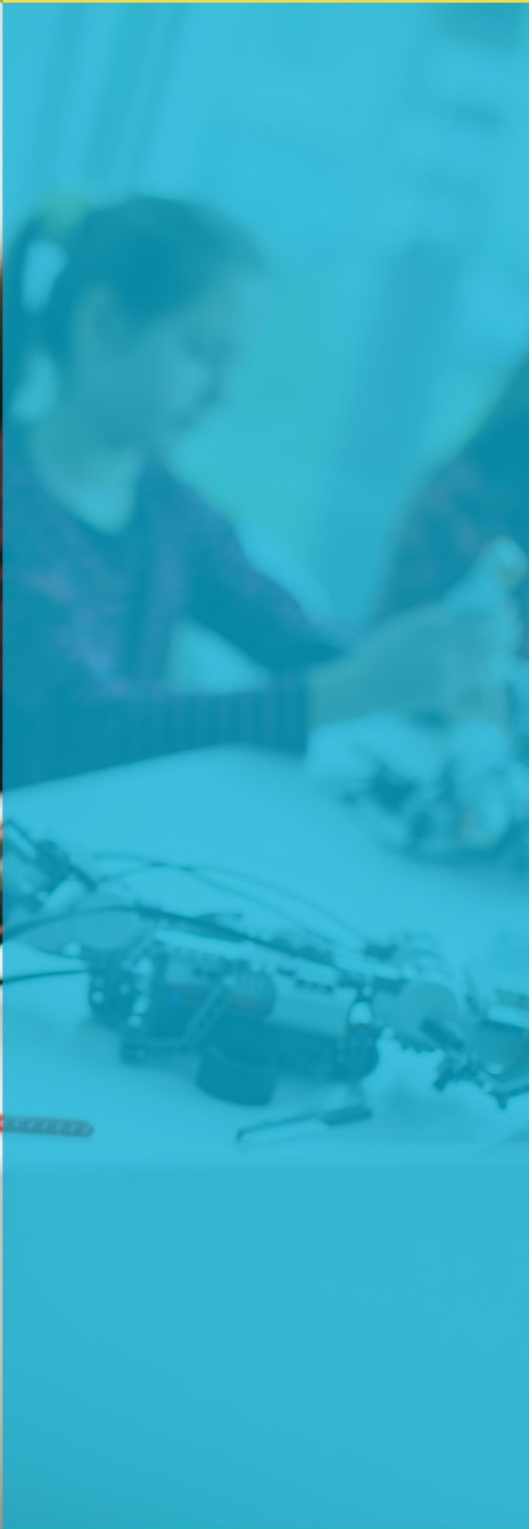
Document Control

Document Ref:		Date Created:	
Version:		Date Modified:	
Author:			
Owning Service			

Change History

Version	Date	Description	Change ID
1			
2			

Children's Service's
Complaints and Compliments
Annual Report
2024-2025



WestBerkshire
C O U N C I L

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Listening to and learning from complaints is an important part of ensuring that the voices of young people and families are always heard, and that we continue to deliver high-quality services that are responsive to feedback.
- 1.2. This report provides an overview of complaints received by Children, family and Education Services between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025. This includes Social Care Complaints (statutory complaints) as well as wider Children and Education Services complaints (non-statutory complaints). This year is the first year that we have combined the report to include all the information.
- 1.3. This report explores the themes from the complaints received, as well as volumes, response times and outcomes. This report also covers positive feedback and compliments received. We produce this report annually as a statutory requirement for West Berkshire Council.

2. Overview

- 2.1. The complaints and data team welcomes all feedback including complaints, compliments, and comments about the services provided.
- 2.2. Young people, families and carers can provide their views in an open and transparent way, through our complaints, compliments and feedback portal online or email ccsc@westberks.gov.uk or call the complaints telephone number 01635 503528. In person or by post to:

Market Street
Newbury
RG14 5LD.

3. Complaints, feedback and compliments:

- 3.1. Children, Family and Education will accept any form of feedback at any stage of working with a young person, family or professional. The information received may help us reflect on our practices and enable us to make effective changes that help and support.
- 3.2. The service welcomes feedback where a member of the team or team itself receives positive feedback, and shares what good looks like within the service and promotes good practice.

3.3. *Complaints processes.*

- 3.4. The complaints manager will generally receive the complaint initially and will
 - Check our understanding of the issues the complainant wants us to investigate and under which complaint process it should be considered.
 - Identify opportunities to resolve the complaint at the earliest opportunity.
 - Manage the complainant's expectations and answer any questions about the process.
 - Hear the complainant's view of what has gone wrong and how they say it has affected them.

3.5. **Statutory Children's Complaints**

- 3.6. Generally, assessments and services in the following areas can be considered under the statutory complaints' procedure
 - Children in need.

- Children in Care.
- Special Guardianship support.
- Post-adoption support.

3.7. The statutory process consists of three stages:

- **Stage 1:** 10 working days, however this may take 20 working days in complex cases. This will be passed to an appropriate manager in the service that the complaint relates to for a response.
- **Stage 2:** An independent investigation using an external independent person and investigating Officer. Time frame between 25 – 65 working days
- **Stage 3:** Review Panel hearing with three independent people on the panel and their decision will be confirmed in writing to you within 28 days of the panel hearing.

3.8. Ombudsman

3.9. The panel (Stage 3) is the last stage of the complaints process. If complainants are not happy with the outcome, the Local Government Ombudsman can be contacted.

3.10. The Ombudsman provides an independent, impartial and free service investigating complaints about services provided by us.

3.11. The Ombudsman can be contacted at any stage of the complaints process but, in most cases, the Ombudsman will want the LA to deal with your complaint before they investigate.

3.12. Corporate complaints

- **Stage 1:** 5 days to acknowledge and 10 days to respond to the complaint, this can be extended for a further 10 days. This is investigated and responded to by the team manager within the service.
- **Stage 2:** 5 days to acknowledge and 20 days to investigate and respond to the complaint, this can be extended for a further period of 20 days. This is completed by a service manager, and they will review:
 - What, if anything, has gone wrong?
 - What was the impact on the person complaining and/ or the wider public?
 - What action should be taken to put things right?

3.13. Appeals or tribunals

3.14. The service will not consider a complaint about an issue where an alternative statutory remedy for the complainant to pursue their complaint exists (e.g. school admissions, penalty charge notices etc.), or where an alternative remedy such as legal action is being sought.

3.15. Persistent Complainers:

3.16. Unreasonable and unreasonably persistent complainants are those complainants who, because of the nature or frequency of their contacts with our organisation, hinder the organisation's consideration of their, or other people's, complaints.

3.17. Our policy “Dealing with unreasonable and unreasonably persistent complainants procedure provides guidance on how to manage complaints appropriately.

3.18. Compliments

3.19. Feedback is gathered from families in a variety ways, each service area will gather feedback at the end of an intervention, at the point of a family closing or when assessment and review take place. Feedback is encouraged as this enables the service to develop and improve practice.

4. Actions from 2024-2025 Annual Report

- Continue to learn from complaints and Principal Social Worker to consider how learning can be improved and disseminated.

Completed: *Future reporting has improved to make a manual process as useful as possible, and part of that process is to incorporate learnings and actions to change the outcomes for customers experiencing the same issues month on month and reduce the number of complaints.*

- Consider producing quarterly learning briefs to capture themes and actions to improve practice.

Completed for Children and families, *this year to incorporate Education in the Quarterly reporting and ensure it is reported to senior management to review and have comment on.*

- Review and improve how family feedback is gathered more regularly, so we are learning continuously and not just when families complain.

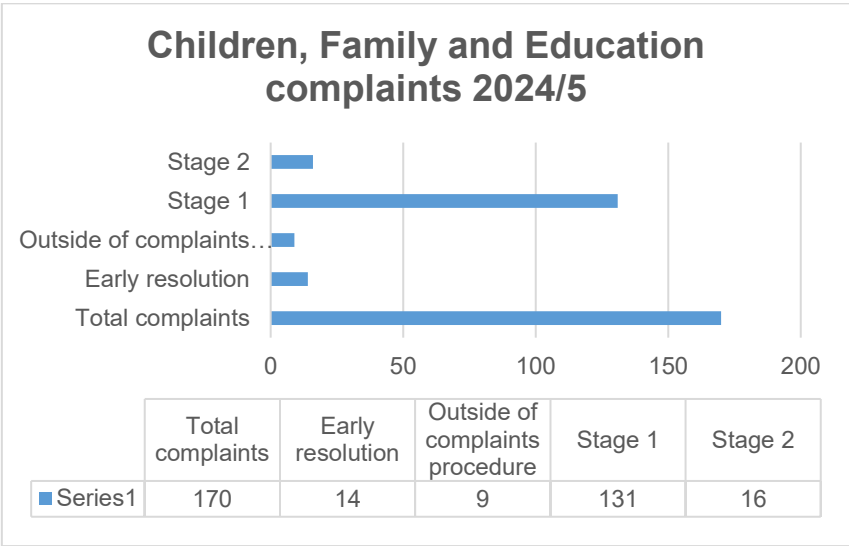
Completed: *All teams are requesting feedback at the end of working with families and children. In addition, there are discussions with WBC collecting data for complaint handling.*

- Improve timeliness of complaint responses.

Completed: *Information as above, we have reduced the reporting timescales to ensure that the expectation for completing the complaint response is high, not only that they are sent on time but that they are quality documents that provide an explanation and support our young people and families.*

5. Facts and Figures 2024/25.

5.1. The figures below are based on all recorded complaints for 2024/5, they are considerably lower than previous year figures.



5.2. The below figures are based only on children and family complaints. The 2024/5 figures include Education services, so there was an expectation that the figures may have been higher, but it is positive that they are lower than the last two years.

2022/2023	183
2023/2024	193

5.3. Included in the figures are all contact where it was determined that the team could manage the customers complaint early and if contact was made through the service but could not follow the complaint process.

5.4. The complaints manager left in June 2024 with the replacement joining in August 2024, new processes were put in place to capture and manage the complaints in a more robust manner.

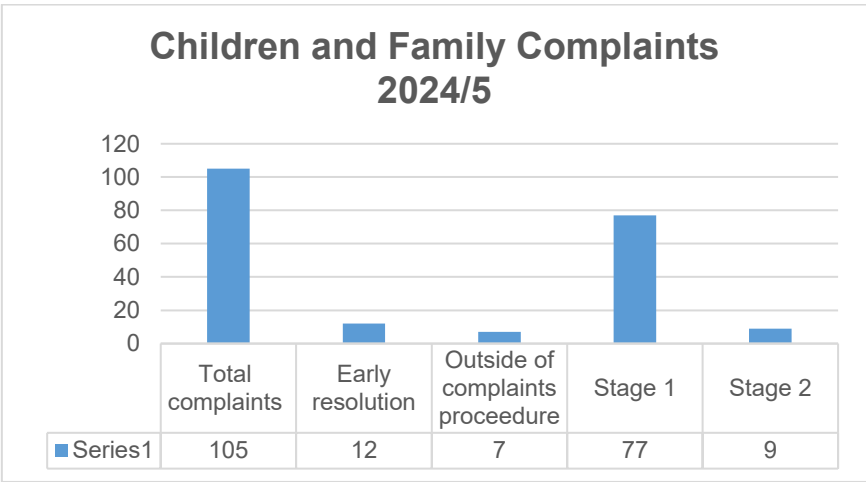
5.5. In November 2024, Children, family and education commenced the management of their own stage 2 complaints, managing and responding to the complainants. Along with the management of any LGSCO queries and investigations that was sent via the link officer. The stage 2 information has been captured from the transition from central management to service management

5.6. The complaints will be split into Children and Family and Education.

5.7. Focused on the following

- Number of complaints
- Service
- Reason
- Time frames
- Outcome
- Cost
- Learning

5.8. **Children and Family Complaint data**



5.9. **Early Resolution:**

5.10. The LGSCO advises that the local and early resolution of issues is key to effective complaint handling and that all complaints can be remedied at any stage of the complaint process without the need for escalation.

5.11. Children, family and Education believe that having relationship-based conversations can only help and support the best outcome for the young person at the heart of any work with the directorate.

5.12. This does not take away any rights to escalate a complaint if a complainant is still unhappy with the remedy.

5.13. It is also not an additional stage in the complaint process.

5.14. **Outside of the complaints procedure:**

5.15. This contact included a complaint made concerning a contracted service, where court proceedings were taking place, and we have had to advise that we are unable to investigate.

5.16. **Statutory Stage 2:**

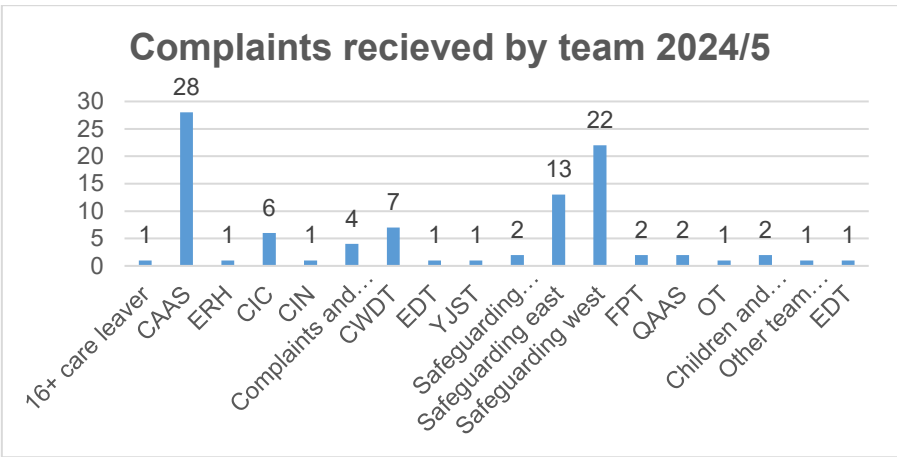
5.17. There have been two statutory stage 2's one completed and one ongoing it commenced earlier in the year but was paused at the request of the family while they explored other resolutions, mediation and a further stage 1 was completed.

5.18. **Statutory Stage 3:**

5.19. There has been one request but to date it has not commenced as the complainant is currently unable to proceed due to personal circumstances.

5.20. All other complaints were addressed and resolved at **Sage 1** of the process.

5.21. **Complaints received by team:**



5.22. Highest complaints are seen in the Contact Advice and Assessment Service (CAAS) and Safeguarding Team.

5.23. It is important to note that Children’s Social Care will be working with around 1500 children across their service.

5.24. **CAAS**

5.25. Contact Advise & Assessment Service (CAAS) are the first team that young people and parents will experience in dealing with Children’s and family services. In 2024 to 2025 there were 12,403 referrals through to the CAAS team.

5.26. Based on their assessment, they may get further support from another part of the service or signposted to other agencies.

5.27. Complaints made to the team have included the information taken by the social worker in relation to assessments. Parents have advised that the information in assessments do not reflect what was said or how it was meant. This causes a lot of distress for the families especially, if the social worker has provided a professional opinion based on what they heard.

5.28. The team offer to add a parents view with the assessment and will amend any factual element of the report. Improved partnership working and building on more relationship-based working has led to improvements.

5.29. **Safeguarding teams**

5.30. The safeguarding teams have received complaints concerning poor communication and service provision. The teams had 944 new referrals in 2025 to 2025 through to Eat and West teams until the introduction of the central team this year. The teams have struggled with time frames and letting families know of time frame changes which has caused cases to drift a little.

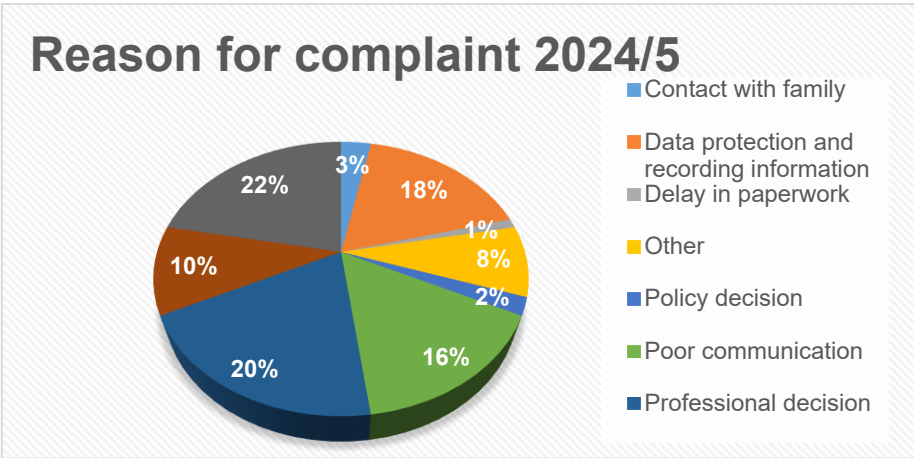
5.31. There have been good reasons for missing timeframes, i.e. sickness and leave but in future this needs to be mitigated by ensuring the family are aware and agreeing a mutually agreed follow up time and date and the team manage as best they can to meet the statutory demands set out. New process has been put in place to ensure timeliness and end of this year additional management capacity has been put in to support this area further.

5.32. **Complaints directly from children**

5.33. All complaints are taken seriously, but complaints directly from children or young people are always prioritised.

5.34. This year the service received 4 complaints directly from a young person or their advocate. 1 complaint because we had denied something a young person wanted; three other complaints was about the social worker and the service being provided to them.

5.35. **Reason for complaints:**



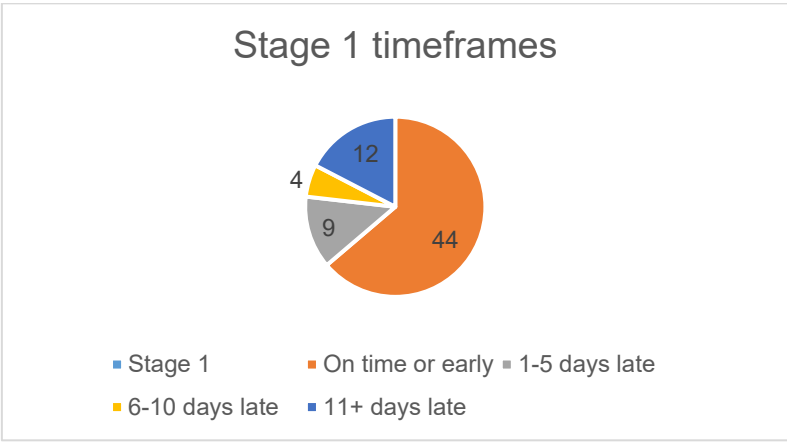
5.36. **Working relationship and attitude:**

5.37. There have been several complaints where families feel the relationship has broken down with their social worker and requested a new one, in some instances it was agreed where it is considered to be in the child’s best interest , in others with additional support it was felt that they should continue to work with the family especially as they had built a relationship with the child or young person.

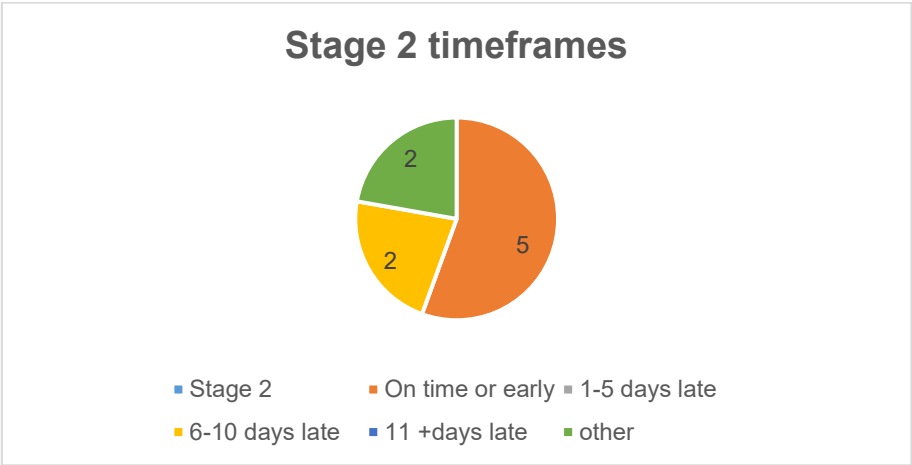
5.38. Some complaints mentioned attitude or inappropriate conversations, these are always subject to individual interpretation but are taken seriously and the complaint is shared with the social worker to understand their position and how they felt the conversation went. In all cases there is learning that is used to work with families ongoing.

5.39. This year the service has relaunched their family safeguarding model, which is focused on relationships and training around motivational interviewing, alongside further training around respectful practice which will enable further development in how we work with families.

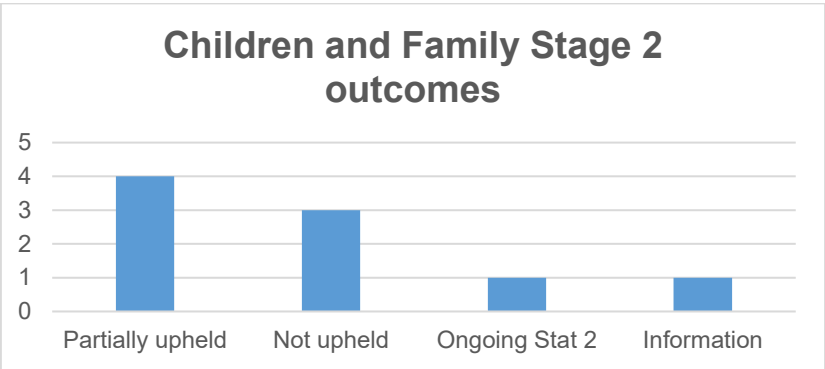
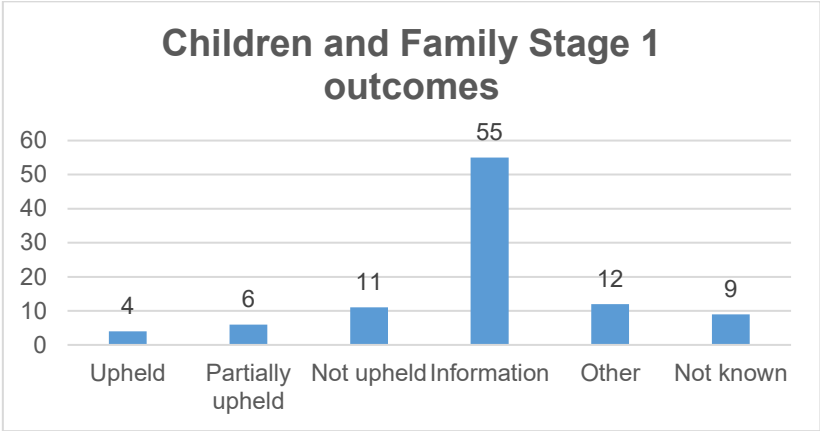
5.40. **Within timeframe:**



- 5.41. The reporting time frames used in this scenario have changed from the reporting last year, long overdue time frames were reported, and it was an action 2023/24 to respond to complaints within timeframes. Included is whether we have advised or requested an extension to respond to the complainants.
- 5.42. In three instances we did ask for an extension but only responded within the new agreed time frame once.



- 5.43. Focusing on ensuring that the team and service managers are aware of the time frames to respond to the complainant and the options to extend if needed. Using a diary system to remind them of the approaching due date.
- 5.44. Providing additional training to ensure that everyone understands their responsibility when and how responding to complaints. Explaining the importance of robust complaint handling in ensuring continued relationships with families.
- 5.45. Arranging to speak to managers commencing stage 2 complaints to look at what information we have already investigated the response and outcome to ensure that we have all the information up front to respond to the complaint fully, this is our last opportunity to review the complaint and get it right before the option to escalate to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.
- 5.46. **Outcomes:**



5.47. Partially upheld has been recorded where elements of the complaint have been upheld, and others haven't in one complaint.

5.48. In both stages there are outcomes of information, this has been used to classify complaints where no particular outcome has been provided for the customer and we have provided information rather than a description of the complaint, what was investigated, the findings and outcome with remedies and learning.

5.49. **Costs:**

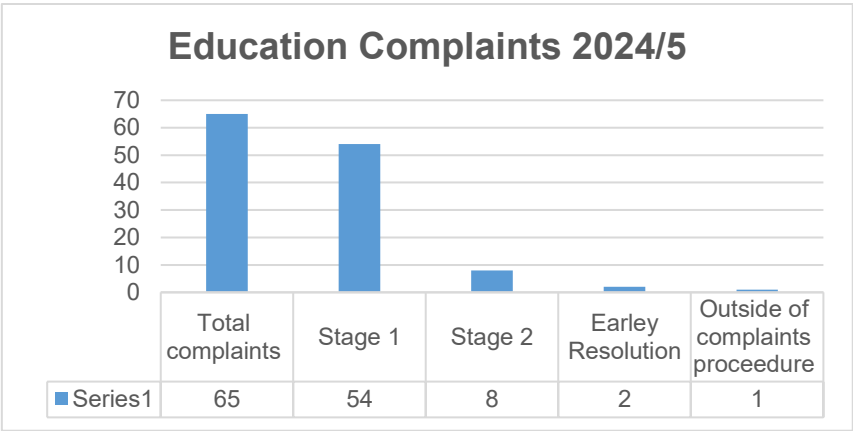
	Stage 1 remedies/goodwill gestures	Stage 2 individual remedies	LGSCO individual recommendations
	100 – not taken up		300
			200
Total			£500

5.50. The £100 was offered to a stage 2 complainant where we had partially upheld a complaint, the complainant chose not to accept it. It is reasonable to offer a financial remedy if the LGSCO recommend that financial remedy is considered where there has been:

- Distress
- Harm or the risk of harm
- Time and trouble

6. Education Complaint Data.

- 6.1. This year is the first year that the combined report will be produced using Children and family data and Education. A small comparison was completed in complaints received for Children and Family, but the complaints team have no data for Education.
- 6.2. The data capturing for the teams commenced in August until the end of March 2025. Comparisons and analysis of this data will only truly be effective from 2026/2027.



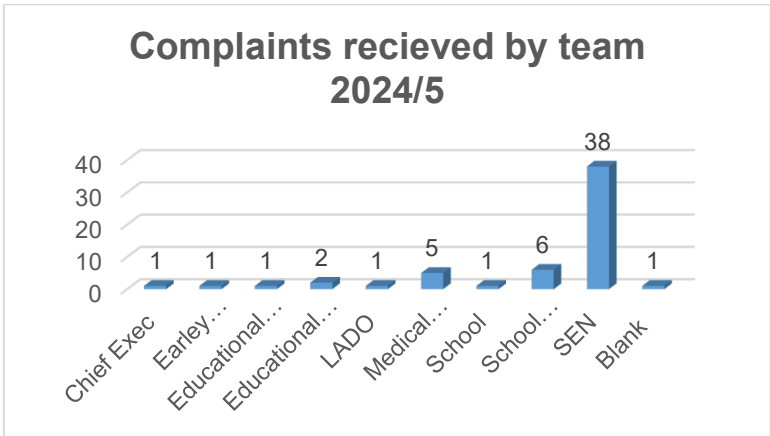
6.3. Stage 1's

- 6.4. The teams completed almost all but two complaints as formal stage 1 complaints, it is possible on reflection of the responses that we may have been able to informally respond to the customer. Complaints where we were being chased for outcomes, could have been responded to as a service request or an early resolution. The team will be encouraged to speak to families early to resolve such issues.

6.5. Stage 2's

- 6.6. Despite having fewer complaints than Children and Families, the Education team had almost the same amount of stage 2 complaints. Feedback from customers was that there was little sincerity in the responses; despite not getting things right we were reluctant to sincerely apologise and offer solutions to make sure it doesn't happen again.

6.7. Complaints received by team



6.8. SEN

6.9. The number of children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in West Berkshire has seen a significant increase over the past three years.

- **2021:** 1198 children with EHCPs
- **2022:** 1322 children with EHCPs
- **2023:** 1532 children with EHCPs
- **2024:** 1737 children with EHCPs

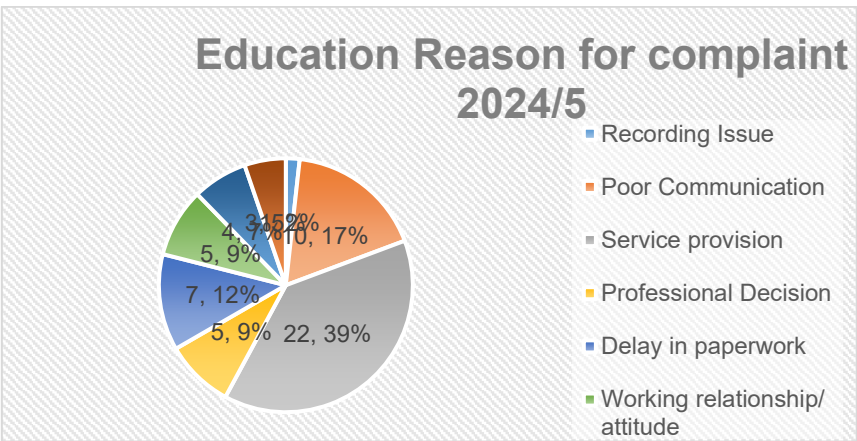
6.10. Several factors have contributed to the increase in the number of children with EHCPs in West Berkshire over the past five years:

- Improved Identification and Diagnosis:
- Increased Awareness and Advocacy:
- Policy Changes and Support Initiatives
- Population Growth
- Early Intervention Programs:

6.11. In the last financial year (2023-24), over one in four (26%) of all complaints made to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) were about Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision. These complaints are a significant portion of the LGSCO's workload, and the Ombudsman finds fault with local authorities in a large percentage of these cases.

6.12. Specifically, the LGSCO's 2023-24 data reveals that 26% of their casework was dominated by complaints related to SEND. Furthermore, 42% of the cases they upheld were also related to SEND. The LGSCO also notes that these complaints often involve significant delays in the process

6.13. Reason for complaint



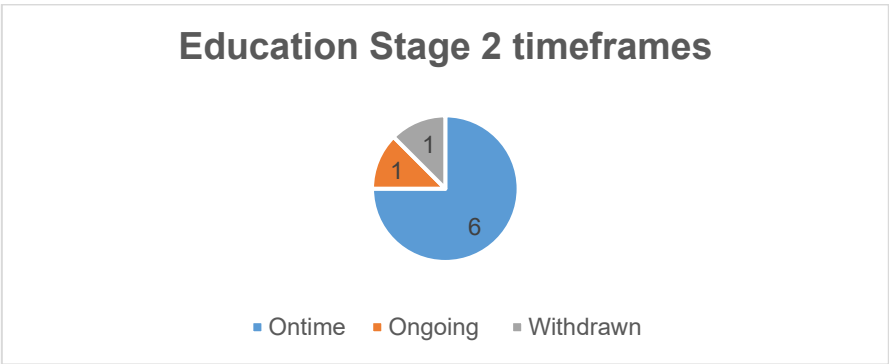
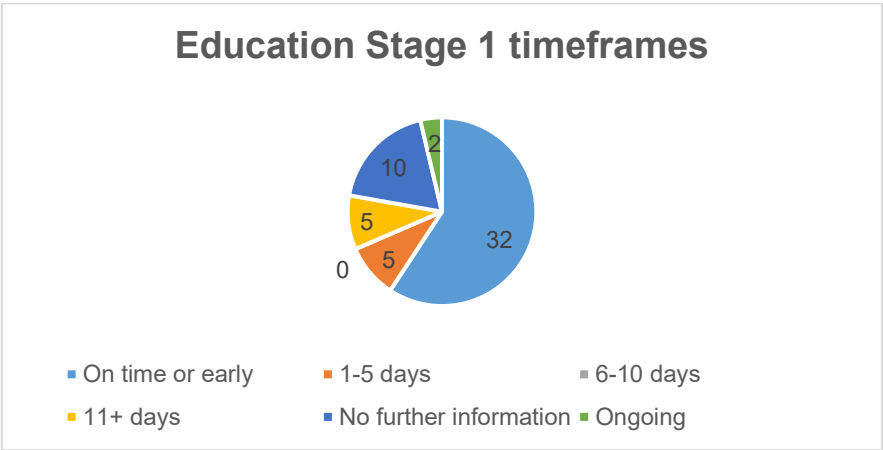
6.14. Service provision and Time frames

6.15. Families felt that what was on their EHCP was not being provided by the education setting and in some instances, they felt that it was necessary to change the education setting. Families

complained about their annual review taking too long to be completed and worried it would affect their opportunity to appeal to the tribunal.

6.16. All the above ties into communication and keeping people informed of what was happening and who was doing what and when. Communicating if unable to meet the deadlines and looking at the processes to see if we can be more efficient within the procedures.

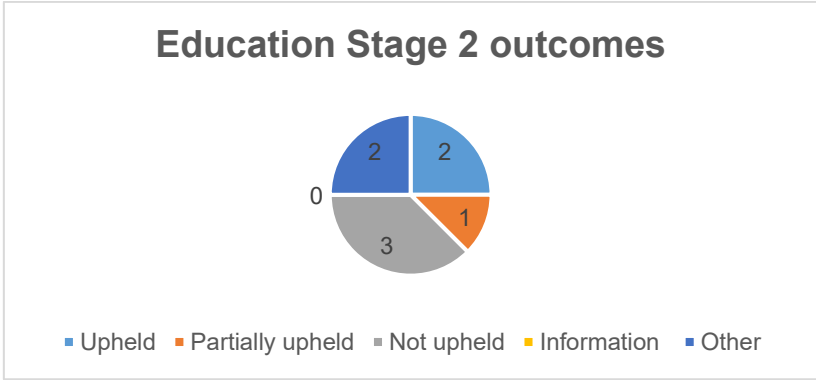
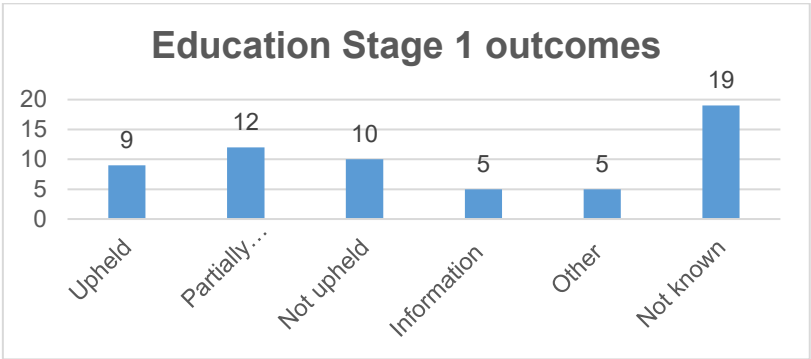
6.17. Within timeframes



6.18. Unfortunately, the data is not fully complete to enable a full analysis of the complaints and therefore there is the category no further information. From August all complaint data was captured fully.

6.19. The team were generally very good at communicating with the Complaints team and completed a response quickly but in some instances were caught up in checking processes meaning that several responses were sent late. There are several complaints that I had a limited handover when I joined the team and despite my attempts to find the information I was unable to find any more information to report on.

6.20. Outcomes



6.21. **Stage 2’s**

6.22. Potentially several stage 2 complaints could have been avoided, in most stage 1’s were issued timely but responses were matter of fact without taking into consideration of the families making the complaint and the emotions concerning that process.

6.23. As part of our learning for the coming year, we aim to better consider the perspectives of families and those who raise concerns. We want to respond with greater compassion and humanity—by putting ourselves in their shoes. This means using plain English, avoiding jargon, and communicating clearly, respectful, and empathetic.

6.24. **Costs:**

	Stage 1 Individual remedies / good will gestures	Stage 2 individual Remedies	LGSCO individual recommendations
		100 - no info	2400.00
			1250.00
			1393.60
		50 not accepted	
Total		£100.00	£5043.60

7. **LGSCO Complaints**

- 7.1. The management of the LGSCO investigations was passed to the services to manage from November 2024.
- 7.2. here were 11 Local Government and Social Care (LGSCO) contacts, in one instance as the complainant had not been through the council’s full complaint process, they were directed back to West Berks.

- 7.3. After an initial investigation the LGSCO decided not to investigate two complaints and another they found no fault.
- 7.4. Three complaints there was a financial remedy, and apologies offered, two required a review of the processes involved.
- 7.5. Four complaints are ongoing at different stages of LGSCO investigation.
- 7.6. The LGSCO have recently reviewed the complaint handling code and provided a new range of information to Local Authorities to support everyone in the complaint handling arena. Policies and procedures have been updated in line with their guidance.
- 7.7. Implementation of the following to ensure every young person and family feel that they are being listened to, and Children, families and Education are responding appropriately with care and compassion.

7.8. Learning

- 7.9. Children, Family and Education have experienced a lot of changes in respect of complaints, with the new complaints code and the service responding to complaints individually and working in collaboration with the Complaint and Data team. Being responsible for stage 2 and LGSCO complaints along with the Statutory complaints process. This has led to the following improvements:

7.10. Complaint process (Learning)

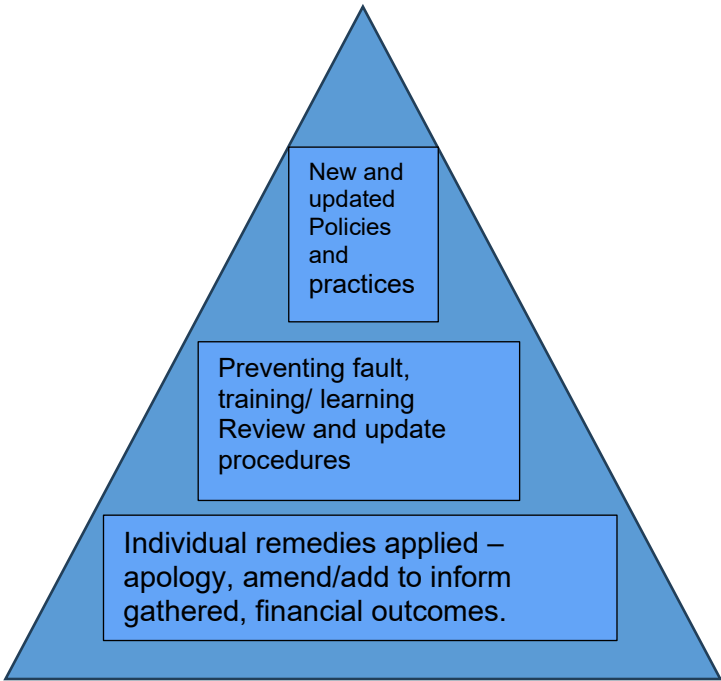
- Robust reporting of complaints, ensuring all complaints are sent via the Complaint and Data team to ensure they are recorded and forwarded to the correct team and manager.
- Time frames provided in the acknowledgement to the young person or families to ensure that expectations are managed.
- Time frames are provided to the teams along with a template to ensure a consistency in the approach to the responses provided to the complainant.
- The responses are quality assessed to ensure the response answers the complaint that it is written in plain English and sent on time.
- Training offered in practice week and to individual teams, sessions provided to school heads.
- Collaborate working between teams, services and schools to provide support and help in responding to complaints.
- New policy written to include all aspects of the complaints processes.
- Adherence to the policy especially dealing with more difficult complainants.
- Quarterly reporting on complaints to understand what the themes and learning are.
- Templates provided as a guide for complaint responses, including outcomes and remedies.
- Discussion on what remedies that are offered including financial remedies.

7.11. Children, Families and Education (Learning)

- 7.12. Much of the following work was in a direct response to learning from complaints that is reported Quarterly, to enable the management team to either address learning opportunities individually, as a team or in Practice weeks that occur twice per year. There is a large selection of training that is available corporately and within the service.

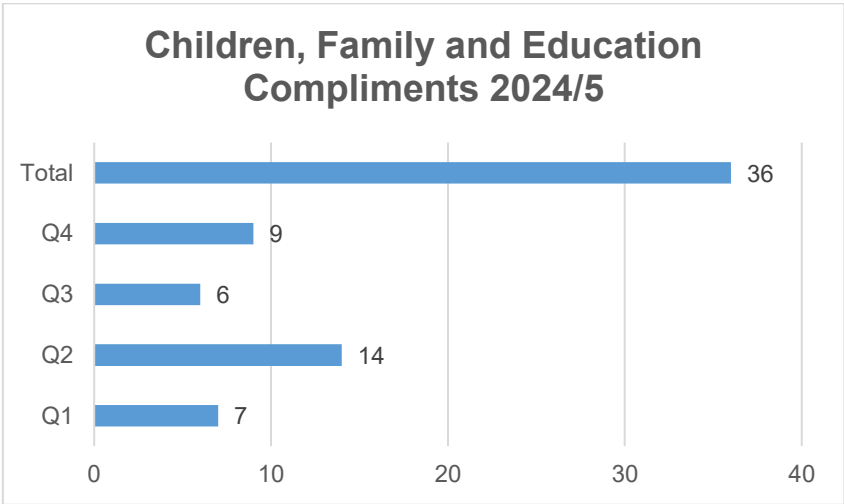
- Gender questioning policy developed
- Changes to Care Director to capture pronouns
- Mandatory EDI training to everyone in West Berkshire Council
- Specific training on recording information, language and accuracy
- An introduction to Health and Care Plans
- Single Assessment Workshop

- Learning reviews
- Leaving Care Legislation and Support including UASC
- Special Guardianship Order Support planning
- Recording Workshop
- WHAT IS Early Help and Why it is so important
- Family Safeguarding Model – case study
- Child First – Youth Justice Approach
- Fostering Hubs, what they do and how they support carers and children in care.
- Social care in Education Health and Care Plans – guide to practitioners about input into an EHCP.
- Working with fathers
- Children with disabilities – case study
- Preparing and Participating in a fostering review
- Recording workshop
- Social care and Tribunals
- Preparing and participating in a Child in Care Review
- What is Practice Education
- Preparing and Participating in a Child Protection Conference.



8. Compliments

8.1. Below fig. is a small representation of the positive feedback the service is receiving, and the service need to ensure this information is captured robustly along with any negative and complaint data.



8.2. Example of some of the positive comments received:

- *“Thank you for all your support and helping me through this. You and your team have been brilliant, and I cannot fault you at all.” Ms G*
- *“The progress you have made with **** in the short space of time we’ve known you is absolutely amazing” Mr R*
- *“My children's lives have improved because the home environment has improved. The children live with their father and the house was a mess. There is now furniture in the house, there has been a massive declutter. The children enjoyed having someone to talk too. They feel that their voice has been heard.”*
- *“My children are now in a routine We stopped alcohol completely My husband and I are now doing DA courses My husband and I did research on challenging behaviours and healthy relationships.”*
- *“I was in a relationship for 11years that was abusive it was so hard to pull away – the social worker pointed out so much to me and I did research because of it and it made me realise and she done so well at bringing the BWA worker on and getting all the support and all the professionals in place”.*
- *“THE WHOLE THING the support has been so supportive and positive I was a nervous wreck at the ICPC and the social worker was so supportive and with me the whole time. She was brilliant.”*
- *“L has been such a great help and support. We as a family have made some great positive changes with the help of the tools she has shown and explained to us.*
- *“I’ve had more support from ERH in West Berks in the 3 weeks I’ve been working with them than I have had in 3 years under a CIN plan with a different LA”.*
- *I’ve spoken with lots of people and they’ve all told me what I should have done or should be doing in the future, you haven’t done that – you’ve listened and asked me how things have felt for me which has been much nicer.*
- *“It was nice to speak to someone who was not judgemental about J not being at school and listened.”*

- *"I am grateful for the help and that people are trying to help my son."The Judge at IRH praised the LA for their work with the children in bringing conclusion of care proceedings and thorough work of assessment and focus on the children and the children have successfully been placed with grandparents following assessment of all options for the children".*
- *" We were so impressed with how hard he worked for K and how much he really cared. There was never a time when we needed to chase anyone or ask for someone to come out as he was present for her every time she needed someone to visit her or talk to her or follow something up. It was a really tough situation and we were so grateful to have him working with her. We wanted to feed that back as he deserves recognition for how brilliant he was".*
- *"I just wanted to email you to offer you some feedback from yesterday's RCPC. We had the two eldest children attend the RCPC yesterday and their feedback about your support was: - We finally feel listened too and have a voice – we didn't feel like we did before- We like our social worker – it feels like she really cares. Their mother also commented on the support that you have implemented and provided since you have taken over as the allocated social worker. She said that the children have previously struggled to engage with social workers, but that they engage with you. Mum said when you visit you will always make time to check in on the children first to make sure they feel heard, and then come to speak to her. She said it makes the children feel valued and that you really do care. The positive work you have undertaken with the family was also echoed by grandparents and professionals within the room. I think it was notable in yesterday's RCPC the work that you have undertaken in the short amount of time that it has been allocated to you and your team has made a positive impact. There were various examples of how efficient you have been in following up on tasks to progress the plan for this family. I think it is important (especially when working in social care) that excellent family work is celebrated – therefore I just wanted to provide this feedback to you Sarah. In a very complex meeting yesterday, it was so positive to hear how you are making a difference in these children's lives".*
- *"Many thanks for the work put in to get L started at the Grange. So far he is loving it".*
- *"I have just had a telephone call with a mother, she spoke highly of the support she has received under your team stating "I now get respite, I'm in a better position to support my boys, we are able to live a bit now, there has been really positive changes. I am supported very well now, it has helped so much"*

9. Moving forward – Priorities for 2025-2026

- 9.1. Ensuring that young people know that they are welcome to contact the service if they have something positive, they want to share, suggestions on our services and complaints when things haven't gone well. That the contact points are clear and usable and investigate if there are newer routes that may serve young people better. Ensure the services are communicating our willingness to listen and how young people can make a difference to how our services look.
- 9.2. Getting feedback from families and young people using the complaints process, understanding how their experience was and looking for ways to improve the service
- 9.3. Continuous improvement in handling complaint investigations and responses so that customers feel listened to. Offering two separate training sessions, one to include general information about complaints and why people make them and one more technical for the managers completing them.
- 9.4. Implement learning from complaints to ensure that the same issue doesn't keep coming up with the same teams.

9.5. Offering symbolic payments at stage 2 if the service has found fault and family or young person has been affected by it. This may reduce the number of LGSCO investigations, if they can see that we have considered all aspects of the complaint and the impact it has had.

10. Conclusion

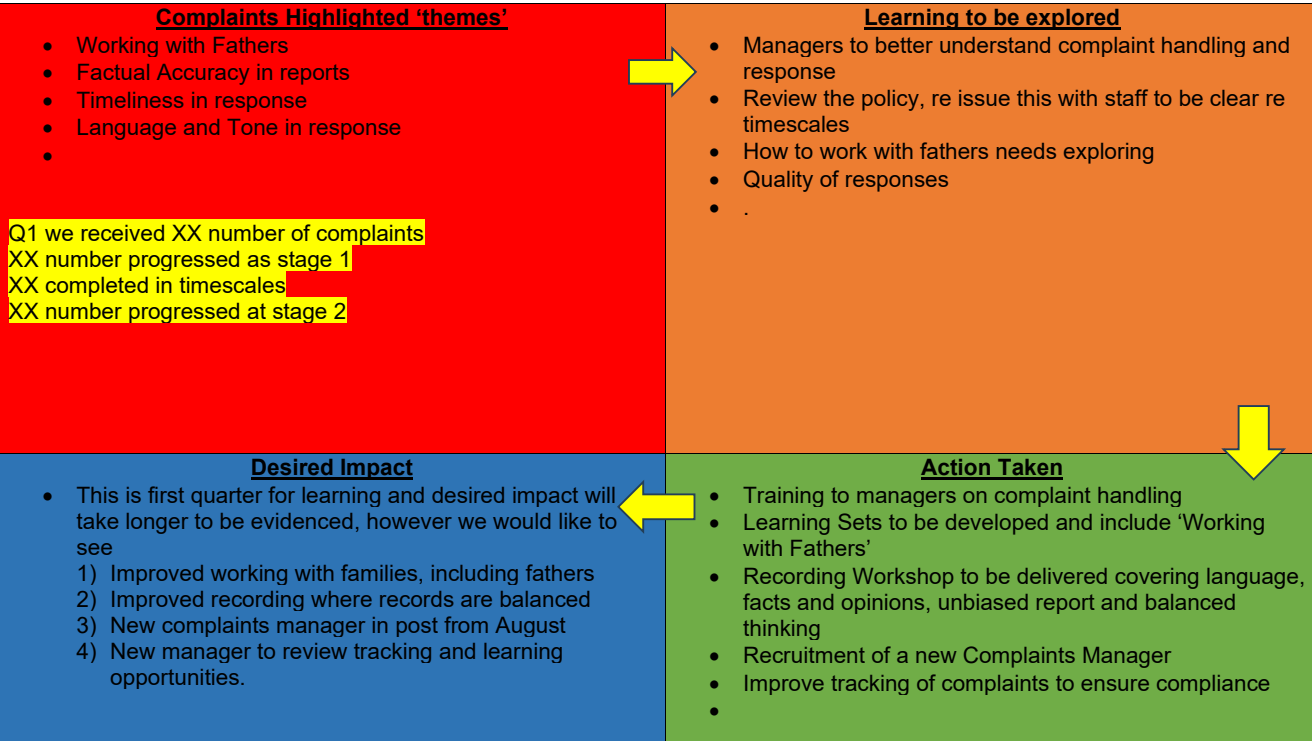
- 10.1. The report highlights the effectiveness of the complaint's procedure and provides evidence that complaints are being managed more effectively, with better timeliness and with compassion.
- 10.2. It provides information about the actual monetary cost of complaints.
- 10.3. The report is an opportunity to reflect on the whole service going forward, we will be able to monitor our process and see where we are making significant gains and where we will need to focus our efforts on making improvements.
- 10.4. Complaints are not viewed negatively but as feedback to listen and learn from our young people and families and this will help the teams across the directorate work together.

11. Appendix

11.1. Quarterly Story Boards completed to ensure continues learning from complaints

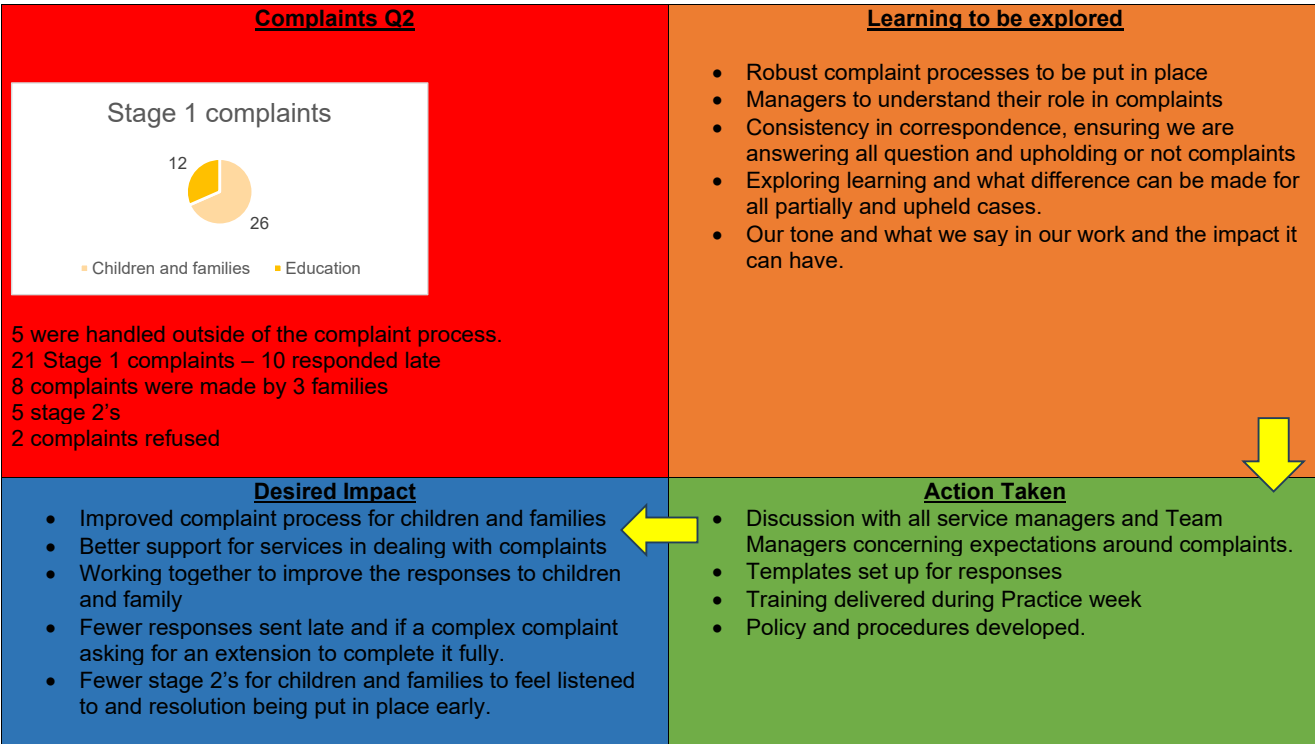
Learning from Complaints – Story Board – Quarter 1 2024/25

We take complaints seriously in Children’s Social Care and consider learning in order to improve services to children and families.



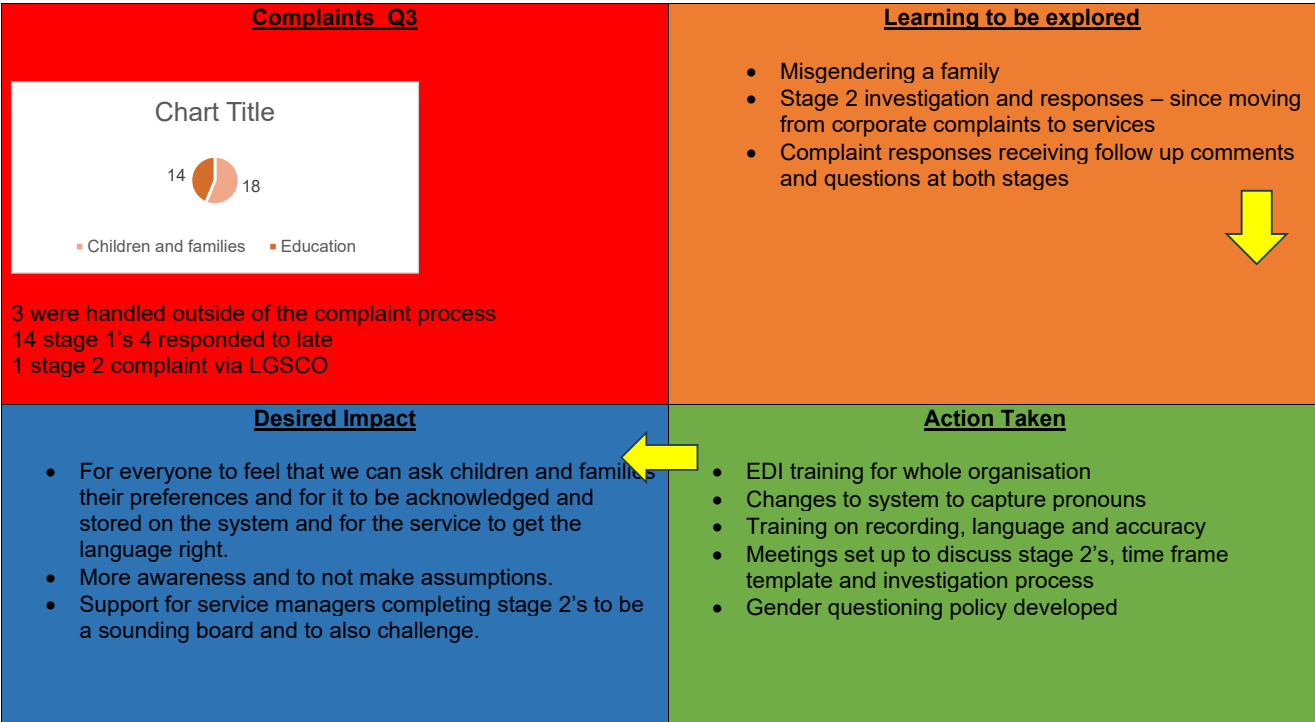
Learning from Complaints – Story Board – Quarter 2 2024/25

We take complaints seriously in Children’s Social Care and consider learning to improve services to children and families.



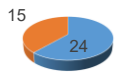
Learning from Complaints – Story Board – Quarter 3 2024/25

We take complaints seriously in Children’s Social Care and consider learning in order to improve services to children and families.



Learning from Complaints – Story Board – Quarter 4 2024/25

We take complaints seriously in Children’s Social Care and consider learning in order to improve services to children and families

Complaints Highlighted 'themes'	Learning to be explored
<div><p>Children Family and Education complaints Q4</p><p>15 24</p><p>■ Children and Family ■ Education</p></div> <p>39 complaints received 9 were resolved early 1 MP letter 6 dealt with outside of complaints</p> <p>17 Responded on time or early 3 Late 3 ongoing 4 Stage 2's corporate and 1 statutory linked to an earlier request.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working together, several complaints were worked on together with Children and Education. Schools were included in discussing actions and responses ensuring a more joined up response.• More complaints dealt with earlier in the process, this is a better outcome for customers getting quicker responses and less time consuming for the teams. Potentially more complaints can be handled in this way.• Quality of reporting information gathered to support Q and Y reporting• Responses to include more specific outcomes e.g up held or not upheld where possible.
Desired Impact	Action Taken
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Earlier upfront conversations with complainants to have a better understanding and resolve earlier• For customers to feel listened to but still understand that they have the right to follow the complaint process.• For more collaborate working and learning together to understand what worked well and what can be improved.• 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training to managers on complaint handling, LGSCO training booked in May and shared just after with the team.• Conversations with the team re outcomes and exploring other remedies.• Challenging on outcomes where upheld, what can we do differently to reduce the same outcome for another complainant.

We are committed to being accessible to everyone. If you require this document in an alternative format or translation, please call Children and Family Services on 551111.

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Child Protection Annual Report 2024-25

Committee considering report:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Date of Committee:	11 September 2025
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Heather Codling
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	12 June 2025
Report Author:	Nicola Robertson

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This is Child Protection Annual Report
- 1.2 To report upon the performance of services for children and young people subject to a child protection plan between 1st April 2024 and 31st March 2025, providing breakdown and commentary regarding the quality of practice within West Berkshire's child protection conference process and to make recommendations for any required remedial action.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 For Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to be informed of Child Protection Activity over the last financial year 2024-2025.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	No financial implications, this is an Annual Report
Human Resource:	No HR implications, this is an Annual Report
Legal:	There are no Legal implication from this Annual Report. The report does ensure compliance with statutory duties under the Children Act 1989, Working together to Safeguard Children 2023, and other legislation.
Risk Management:	There are no Risk Management Implications, this is an Annual Report

	The report does ensure compliance with statutory duties under the Children Act 1989, Working together to Safeguard Children 2023, and other legislation.			
Property:	There are no property implications, this is an Annual Report			
Policy:	There are no Policy implications, this is an Annual Report.			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?	x			<p>This is West Berkshire Child Protection Annual Report for 2024-2025, there are no proposed decisions required.</p> <p>To note: Practice standards and the Pan Berkshire CP Procedures ensure there is equitable experiences for children and their families within the conference process.</p> <p>Conferences are held taking account of family member needs in relation to their welfare/safety and adult and child advocacy is provided where appropriate and relevant.</p> <p>Conference venues are held within locations which can be easily accessed by all and where required interpreters are arranged to support families where English is not their first language.</p>
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	x			Annual report, therefore, no proposed decisions required
Environmental Impact:		x		No significant environmental impact identified.

Health Impact:	x			Improvement in practice will contribute to keeping children safe and improved outcomes for children and young people subject to a CP plan.
ICT Impact:		x		No significant ICT impact identified.
Digital Services Impact:		x		No significant digital services impact identified.
Council Strategy Priorities:	x			Supports priorities related to vulnerable children.
Core Business:	x			Strengthens the council's ability to meet statutory obligations and deliver high-quality services.
Data Impact:		x		No significant data impact identified.
Consultation and Engagement:	<p>There has been ongoing engagement with families and professionals attending conferences to inform service improvements.</p> <p>The primary focus of all the Child Protection Chairs is to ensure that the needs and safety of children are kept at the forefront within conferences and the voices of the child(ren) themselves are central to this and evident within all work undertaken within child protection procedures.</p> <p>This is achieved in a number of ways; encouraging and supporting children and young people to attend conferences where it is appropriate to do so and ensuring they have been provided with independent Advocacy where relevant and from feedback provided by children and other professionals attending the conferences. This feedback is included within this report.</p> <p>The information and data captured within the report evidences a clear understanding throughout the organisation of the importance of ensuring that children's views are considered and taken into account within work completed with them and their families.</p>			

4 Executive Summary

4.1 Overview

- 4.2 As of March 2025, 208 children were subject to Child Protection (CP) Plans in West Berkshire. This figure has remained stable compared to the previous year and, while still above national averages, the rate per 10,000 children is now more aligned with regional and national benchmarks.
- 4.3 The average length of time children remain on a CP plan has risen this year to one year. In response we have re-established the CP surgery led by the Service Manager for Quality Assurance and Safeguarding (QAAS) Service and the Service Manager for

Family Safeguarding to review all CP plans which have been in place in excess of a year. The aim of these reviews is to quickly identify where drift or delay maybe occurring and to ensure that CP plans are being driven through in a time way for children.

- 4.4 The percentage of children in WBC who returned to a CP plan within 2 years of the previous period of CP ending is 21% as of 31st March 2025. The England average is 13%. An audit was undertaken as a test of assurance. No escalations were required for concerns relating to safeguarding/the safety of the children from the audits. All practice was felt to currently be appropriate to identified need.
- 4.5 The most predominant category of harm used in West Berkshire is Emotional Harm and is largely due to the high number of children on CP plans in West Berkshire because of domestic abuse occurring in the home.
- 4.6 75% of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs) and 84% of Review Child Protection Conferences (RCPCs) were held within the statutory timeframe over this period, this is a drop on the previous year and is due to a number of factors, which are listed in full on page 15 of this report. The quality of the Social Worker reports for conference is largely good and they are generally shared in a timely way with families. There is a need however to ensure that they are always shared face to face.
- 4.7 There were 940 CP Chair's Report audits completed over this period and of these 73% (75%) found the standard of practice across the Child Protection Conferences by all agencies met good. Where it was identified practice did not meet good, where necessary these issues were addressed by the Chair with the relevant professional/agency. The breadth of the Issues Resolutions raised over this period demonstrate the depth of monitoring the Chairs undertake within the cases they hold. Often the CP Chair has been the consistent professional involved within a child's family and this has been a key factor in keeping children sighted and plans on track over this period.
- 4.8 Participation and engagement by parents and professionals within the conference is good and some examples of feedback received from them in relation to their experience of the conferences are provided within the body of the report. The vast majority of feedback received is positive, however where an issue is raised this is always addressed to the CP Chair's best ability. QAAS has also developed a set of practice standards for CP conferences over this period to ensure consistency of experience for families involved within this process.
- 4.9 There is very good promotion and take up of advocacy for children subject to CP plans and a small proportion of parents have also been supported by adult advocates where appropriate.

4.10 Key Themes and Learning

- 4.11 Mental health and domestic abuse continue to be the most prevalent concerns. Parental mental health was a factor in 58.1% of cases, while child mental health concerns rose to 26.9%. Domestic abuse was present in 58.5% of cases.
- 4.12 The percentage of children returning to a CP plan within two years was 21%, which is higher than the national average of 13%. Most repeat plans were linked to persistent

domestic abuse and parental vulnerabilities. Audits indicated that in 80% of these cases, repeat plans were not avoidable. The most common reason for a second CP plan was the non-abusive parent forming a new relationship with someone who also exhibited abusive behaviours.

- 4.13 Timeliness of statutory meetings has declined, with 75% of Initial CP Conferences and 84% of Review CP Conferences held within required timeframes. Delays have been predominantly due to staff sickness and timeliness of reporting. In response, the CP Surgery has been reinstated to address drift in long-standing plans.

4.14 Quality and Impact of Practice

- 4.15 A total of 940 CP Chair audits were completed, with 73% rating practice as good. Where standards were not met, CP Chairs intervened directly raising challenge. Social work practice showed that 87% of ICPC and 88% of RCPC reports were shared on time. Report quality was strong, with 88% rated as 'Good'.
- 4.16 The consistent presence and challenge from CP Chairs have been instrumental in maintaining focus on the child and driving plans forward. Thematic audits, such as those on chronologies and repeat plans, led to tangible improvements in consistency.
- 4.17 Quality Assurance and Safeguarding (QAAS) Service also introduced new practice standards to ensure a consistent experience for families.

4.18 Feedback and Participation

- 4.19 Children and families were actively engaged in the CP process. A total of 94 children attended their own CP conferences, an increase from the previous year.
- 4.20 Advocacy was provided in 125 conferences for parents and was widely promoted for children.
- 4.21 Feedback from families was overwhelmingly positive, with many reporting feeling heard, supported, and respected.
- 4.22 Professional feedback was also strong, with 313 professionals submitting responses that praised the clarity, compassion, and leadership of CP Chairs. Concerns raised, such as delays or missing professionals, were followed up and addressed.
- 4.23 QAAS continues to review and improve feedback mechanisms to ensure all voices are heard and acted upon.

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 The qualitative and quantitative data within this report evidences a breadth of good practice and improvements achieved.
- 5.2 The Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Service continues to maintain focus upon the need to ensure that the children and young people within West Berkshire achieve good outcomes and has made further improvements within how services are delivered with this aim.

5.3 Annual Report at Appendix 1

6 Other options considered

6.1 This is an Annual Report, therefore no other options considered.

7 Conclusion

7.1 West Berkshire Council has demonstrated strong performance in working with children subject to a child protection plan and their families, with plans for continued improvement.

7.2 The feedback from families and partner agencies is overwhelmingly positive.

7.3 The Service continues to audit and explore learning to ensure on going improvements are made to ensure children and young people are safe and safeguarding concerns are addressed and minimised.

7.4 For the coming year there are a number of recommendations outlined in the report which the service will take forward.

7.5 Families First Partnership Reforms will bring some changes to this area, developing Child Protection Safeguarding Leads, West Berkshire are in consultation stages around how this will be developed and embedded.

8 Appendix

8.1 Child Protection Annual Report 2024-2025

Background Papers: Annual Child Protection Report 2024-25

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐ No: ☐

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval ☐

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council ☐

Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position ☐

Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months ☐

Item is Urgent Key Decision ☐

Report is to note only ☐

Wards affected: All

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West Berkshire QAAS Annual Child Protection Report 2024-25



West Berkshire
C O U N C I L

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1. Executive Summary:

At 208 the number of Children and Young People subject to Child Protection Plans open to the Child Protection Chairs (CPC) as of March 2025 has remained relatively stable over this period in comparison to the number of Children and Young People subject to a Child Protection Plan in March 2024 (210). Although still higher, the number of children per 10,000 subject to a CP plan is more aligned with the South-East and England rates.

Domestic abuse remains the predominant identified factor of concern within the conferences, but the most notable rise has been in the number of children and young people and parents identified as having mental health difficulties over this period in comparison to the previous period.

The average length of time children remain on a CP plan has risen this year to one year. In response we have re-established the CP surgery led by the Service Manager for QAAS and the Service Manager for Family Safeguarding to review all CP plans which have been in place in excess of a year. The aim of these reviews is to quickly identify where drift or delay made to occurring and to ensure that CP plans are being driven through in a time way for children.

The percentage of children in WBC who returned to a CP plan within 2 years of the previous period of CP ending is 21% as of 31st March 2025. The England average is 13%. An audit was undertaken as a test of assurance. No escalations were required for concerns relating to safeguarding/the safety of the children from the audits. All practice was felt to currently be appropriate to identified need.

The most predominant category of harm used in West Berkshire is Emotional Harm and is largely due to the high number of children on CP plans in West Berkshire because of domestic abuse occurring in the home.

75% of ICPCs and 84% of RCPCs were held within the statutory timeframe over this period, this is a drop on the previous year and due to a number of factors, which are listed in full on page 15 of this report. The quality of the SW reports for conference is largely good and they are generally shared in a time way with families. There is a need however to ensure that they are always shared face to face.

There were 940 CP Chair's Report audits completed over this period and of these 73% (75%) found the standard of practice across the Child Protection Conferences by all agencies met good. Where it was identified practice did not meet good, where necessary these issues were addressed by the Chair with the relevant professional/agency. The breadth of the Issues Resolutions raised over this period demonstrate the depth of monitoring the Chairs undertake within the cases they hold. Often the CP Chair has been the consistent professional involved within a child's family and this has been a key factor in keeping children sighted and plans on track over this period.

Participation and engagement by parents and professionals within the conference is good and some examples of feedback received from them in relation to their experience of the conferences is provided within the body of the report. The vast

majority of feedback received is positive, however where an issue is raised this is always addressed to the CP Chair's best ability. QAAS has also developed a set of practice standards for CP conferences over this period to ensure consistency of experience for families involved within this process.

There is very good promotion and take up of advocacy for children subject to CP plans and a small proportion of parents have also been supported by adult advocates where appropriate.

2. Recommended actions from the Quality Assurance & Safeguarding Service 2023-24 West Berkshire Annual Child Protection Report:

Recommendation:	Who:	Outcome:
Consider the viability of EMRAC being used to monitor and run plans around children and young people identified as at risk of child exploitation when the risk is solely outside the home.	Chair of EMRAC	This was explored but was not felt to be logistically viable, however the Chair of EMRAC is exploring alternative options and this remains a work in progress.
Complete an audit of repeat CP Plans to look for any learning and seek to understand if they were avoidable and whether there is any aspect of the conferencing process which could be strengthened.	QAAS Service Manager with Children Services Management Team	Learning is referenced within this report and has been shared via the Performance & QA Meeting.
QAAS to set aside time with the Participation Officer to review how feedback is obtained from children and young people, particularly those who have attended their CP conferences and the number of children providing feedback might be improved.	The QAAS Service and the Children's Participation Officer	<p>This was scheduled to take place earlier in 2025 however a series of Children Services peer Inspections and an Ofsted Focused Visit delayed the commencement of this and it will be carried forward and completed over the 2025-26 reporting period.</p> <p>Over April 2025 RVue has developed a consultation document for Adolescents, which has gone live and is currently working with the Participation Officer and QAAS to</p>

		develop documentation for children and young people within different age ranges and with special needs.
There would be benefit in holding reflective case discussions with the social workers currently working with families within child protection who have been identified as having learning difficulties as a test of assurance in relation to the quality of practice in this area within WBC.	Principal social worker within the staff forums	It was agreed this would occur as part of the discussions with SWs within the monthly full case file auditing process.

3. Acronyms used within this report:

ADCS	Association of Directors of Children Services
CAAS	Contact Advice & Assessment Service
CCA	Case Conference Advisors
C&FS	Children & Family Services
Chair	Child Protection Chair
CIN	Child in Need
CIC	Children in Care
CP	Child Protection
CPC	Child Protection Conference
CWD	Children With Disabilities Team
FSE	Family Safeguarding East Team
FSW	Family Safeguarding West Team
IR	Issues Resolution
LA	Local Authority
NYAS	National Youth Advocacy Service
OLA	Other Local Authority
QAAS	Quality Assurance & Safeguarding Service
SESLIP	South-East Sector Led Improvement Programme
WBC	West Berkshire Council

4. The role of the Child Protection Conferences and the Child Protection Conference Chair:

(Please note that the previous period's data is in brackets within this report for comparison purposes)

- 4.1. A Child Protection Conference (CPC) is a meeting between family members, the child (where appropriate), and professionals involved with the family, about a child's future safety, health and development. It is designed to look at all the relevant information and circumstances to determine how best to safeguard the child and promote their welfare.
- 4.2. West Berkshire Child Protection Conference Chairs are highly experienced, independent managers, accountable to the Director of Children's Services. They have no operational or line management responsibility for the children.
- 4.3. If a decision is made that a child requires a protection plan to safeguard their welfare, the Chair ensures that:
 - The risks to the child are stated and what needs to change is specified.
 - A qualified social worker is identified as a Lead social worker to develop, co-ordinate and implement the Child Protection Plan.
 - A core group is identified with family members and professionals.
 - A date is set for the first core group meeting within ten working days of the Initial Conference and timescales set for subsequent meetings.
 - A date for the Child Protection Review Conference has been set.
 - The outline Child Protection Plan is formulated and clearly understood by all concerned, including the parents and, where appropriate, the child.
- 4.4. If the conference determines that a child does not need the specific assistance of a protection plan but does need help to promote their welfare, the Chair must ensure that:
 - The conference draws up a child in need plan or makes appropriate recommendations for a plan.
 - The conference considers any local protocols in place referred to as 'step down procedures' or Family Group Conference processes.

5. Audits:

- 5.1. Outside of the conferences, a key area of work undertaken by the Child Protection Chairs relates to quality assurance through use of auditing. The Chairs conduct an audit of the child's case file at the point of every child protection meeting and child in care review. These audits can be a powerful driver in improving the quality of front-line practice and the management of services for children and their families. Audits play a crucial role in ensuring the focus remains upon the child and outcomes for children and young people improve.

- 5.2. Auditing enables us to bring to life the experiences of children, young people and their families, and assess the difference our practice is making. They are an integral part of West Berkshire's QA programme.
- 5.3. There were 940 CP Chair's Report audits completed over this period and of these 73% (75%) found the standard of practice across the Child Protection Conferences by all agencies met good. Where it was identified practice did not meet good, where necessary these issues were addressed by the Chair with the relevant professional/agency.
- 5.4. QAAS undertakes targeted auditing where required and has completed the following audits over this period:
- Themed Dip Audit of practice standards – Chronologies – December 2024. The learning from this audit led to amendments within the process and practice guidance. The impact of this audit has been more consistency of the format and presence use of chronologies within children's case files evidenced through subsequent full case file audits.
 - Repeat CP Plans Audit – January 2025 – this audit was undertaken following a rise in the number of children sitting within this category in West Berkshire. With the exception of two families the children audited had been subject to the first period of CP planning for approximately a year and there was a further period of 11 months to 2 years before they returned to a CP plan. Where auditors formed the view the repeat period of CP planning might have been avoided this was for the following reasons:
 - Limited engagement with domestic abuse supports by the abusive parent.
 - Parental learning difficulties and an inability to adapt parenting styles as the child grew, which led to safeguarding concerns.
 - The links between the abusive parent's alcohol misuse as a trigger to the neglect and domestic abuse issues not being sufficiently explored and addressed in the first period of CP planning.

Whilst this learning may be useful this was a very small cohort of the families overall (3).

The challenge in successfully engaging with parents who present with domestically abusive behaviours was that this could not be compelled and within the case files reviewed there was insufficient threshold to escalate to care proceedings.

Another frequently recurring theme where there was identified domestic abuse was with the mother forming a new relationship at a later period with someone who also presented with domestically abusive behaviour. The mother had engaged with supports provided to build safety into their relationship choices prior to WBC involvement ending, but this had unfortunately not prevented them from forming a relationship with another perpetrator of domestic abuse.

There was unanimous agreement to end the previous period of CP planning by all the professionals working with the family and the average length of time they remained open under CIN prior to closure was 5 months. Procedurally the requirement is for a period of at least 3 months.

No escalations were required for concerns relating to safeguarding/the safety of the children from the audits. All practice was felt to currently be appropriate to identified need.

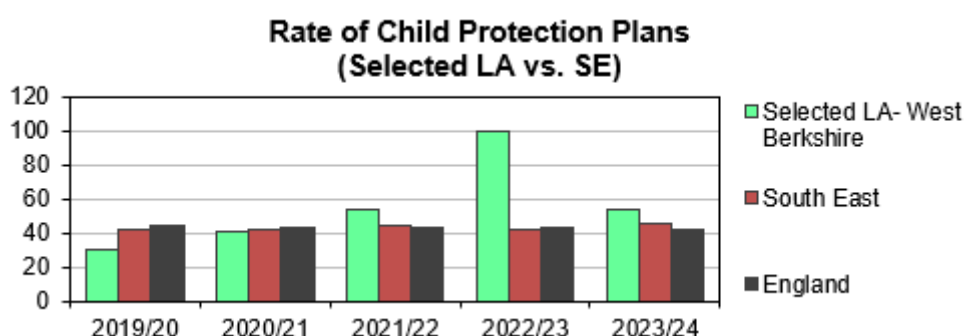
- 5.5 QAAS has also developed a set of practice standards for CP conferences over this period to ensure consistency of experience for families involved within this process.

6. Number of children subject to a CP Plan:

- 6.1. The number of Children and Young People subject to Child Protection Plans open to the Child Protection Chairs (CPC) as of March 2025 has remained relatively stable over this period in comparison to the number of Children and Young People subject to a Child Protection Plan in March 2024.

CP Numbers	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021	March 2022	March 2023	March 2024	March 2025
Number of Children subject to CP plans (excluding temporary plans)	117	129	143	187	342	210	208

7. Rate of ICPCs:





(Freely Available Data Benchmarking Reports – SESLIP)

- 7.1. WBC's rate per 10,000 has stayed at 58, which remains higher than the England (41.6 as of 31/3/24) and South-East sector (45 as of 31/3/25) averages, but as

can be seen from the chart above the rate is more in line with them than it has been in the previous two reporting periods.

- 7.2. In WBC there are three main pathways to ICPC. The majority come through the Contact, Advice and Assessment Service following assessment of new referrals, while a significant proportion over this period has again also come via the two Safeguarding Teams.

Team 	CAAS	CWD	FS East	FS West	Transfer in from other LAs
Number held 					
	73 (69)	2 (3)	27 (31)	20 (22)	4 (4)
As a % overall (rounded to nearest .5%)	56 (53.5)	1.5 (2.5)	21.5 (24)	16 (17)	3 (3)

- 7.3. Just under 4% of the families brought to ICPC over this period remained Child in Need, with a further 8% of families having a mixture of CP and CIN plans as an outcome. This indicates children are individually assessed on need and professionals and the Child Protection Chairs are applying threshold and not automatically assuming it is met for all.

8. Factors of concern identified within the child protection conferences:

- 8.1. Domestic abuse, parental substance misuse and parental mental health issues have always been prevalent factors identified within WBC families (and nationally) where the children in the family are subject to child protection plans. Appendix 1 contains the full breakdown of the identified factors within conferences between 2019 and 2025. The table below contains a comparison of the key factors over the past 4 periods.

Table: Key Identified Factors identified within CP Conferences each period between 2019 (pre-covid) and 2025 as a percentage:

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Child Mental Health	16.5%	13.5%	19%	19.5%	26.9%
Child School Attendance	19.5%	19.5%	30%	31.7%	29.8%
Parental Mental Health	47.5%	53.5%	54%	48.8%	58.1%
Parental Financial Hardship	8.5%	8%	17%	17.7%	21.4%

Parental Domestic Abuse	61.5%	54.5%	63%	63%	58.5%
Parental Drug Misuse	26%	24.5%	25.5%	31.5%	33.5%
Parental Alcohol Misuse	25%	22%	27%	27.4%	27.3%

The most notable rise has been in the number of children and young people and parents identified as having mental health difficulties over this period in comparison to the previous period, which appears to be in line with the overall England numbers.

Poor parental mental health is reported to have overtaken domestic violence as the most commonly reported factor in social worker assessments into whether a child is at risk of serious harm or neglect since 2021, according to new research undertaken by the ADCS ([ADCS Safeguarding Pressures Phase9 FINAL.pdf](#) – P17).

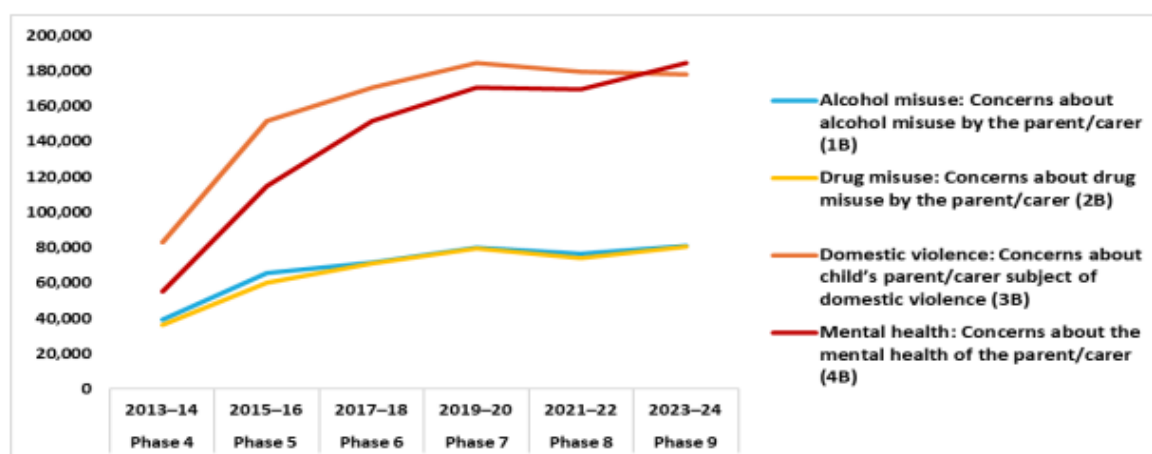


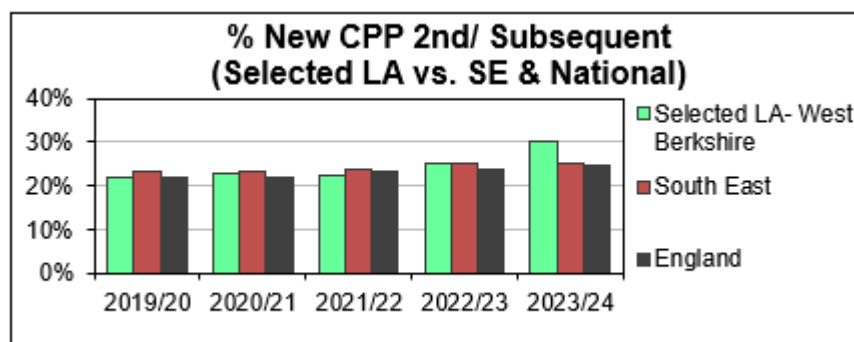
Figure 2: Children's social care assessment factors for parents/carers.

- 8.2. **School Attendance as an Identified Factor of concern within WBC child protection conferences:**
- 8.3. There has been a decrease of 1.9% in the number of children subject to CP plans in WBC where school attendance was an identified issue in comparison to the previous reporting period.
- 8.4. During 2022/23 the National overall absence rate published by the DfE was 10.7%, over 2023/24 this reduced to 8.1% and as of May 2025 this figure is sitting at 6.7%. WBC's rates align with the DfE findings.

9. Child Protection Conference Outcome data:

Number:	No. of children as of March 2024:
Category:	
The number of children subject to a child protection plan for 9 months or more (snapshot at end of month)	90
Repeat plans - Children and young people subject of a CP Plan for a second or subsequent time within 2 years	21%
Number of children remaining CIN from the Initial Child Protection Conference	28 (15 families)
Number of children made subject of a Child Protection Plan at ICPC over this period	228 (119 families)
Number of children who stepped down from a CP plan following RCPC	179 (90 families)
Number of children who moved from CP to CIC at RCPC	33 (20 families)
Number of children who stepped down from a CP plan at first review	14 (12 families)
Average length of child protection plans (no. of days - snapshot at the end of month)	379.37 (12 months)

- 9.1. This period has seen a continued increase in the number of children subject to a CP plan in excess of 9 months.
- 9.2. The CP surgery, which was set up to review all children meeting this criterion, who are not subject to care proceedings and the scrutiny of the Court, has not taken place over this period due to resourcing issues. It is however now back in place and has identified there was some drift occurring. This was subsequently addressed. The surgery had previously been effective in ensuring no drift was occurring and in understanding the factors leading to CP plans being in place over 9 months. With this now back in place we anticipate this figure will reduce.



[Freely Available Data Benchmarking Reports – SESLIP](#)

- 9.3. As can be seen within the above table, the number of children subject to a repeat child protection plan ever in WBC (in green) was higher than the southeast average over the 2023/24 reporting period (in red).
- 9.4. The percentage of children in WBC who returned to a CP plan within 2 years of the previous period of CP ending is 21% as of 31st March 2025. The England average is 13%.
- 9.5. An audit was undertaken as a test of assurance. The aim of the audit was to better understand:
- what factors had led to the original period of CP planning,
 - what factors had led to their current period of CP planning and
 - whether or not the second period of CP planning could reasonably have been avoided.
- 9.6 A high proportion of these families had domestic abuse as an identified factor and over half had one or more of the trio of vulnerabilities as identified risk factors. They all returned to CP plans for similar reasons, but the auditors were of the view that with 80% of these families this had not been avoidable. The most common factor leading to the second period of CP planning was the non-abusive parent forming a new relationship sometime later with someone who was also presenting with domestically abusive behaviours. The auditors were of the view that this could not have been foreseen given work completed with the parent during the initial period of CP planning. With the exception of two families the children audited had been subject to the first period of CP planning for approximately a year and there was a further period of 11 months to 2 years before they returned to a CP plan.
- 9.7 Where auditors formed the view the repeat period of CP planning might have been avoided this was for the following reasons:
- Limited engagement with domestic abuse supports by the abusive parent.
 - Parental learning difficulties and an inability to adapt parenting styles as the child grew, which led to safeguarding concerns.
 - The links between the abusive parent's alcohol misuse as a trigger to the neglect and domestic abuse issues not being sufficiently explored and addressed in the first period of CP planning.

Whilst this learning may be useful this was a very small cohort of the families overall (3).

- 9.8 The challenge in successfully engaging with parents who present with domestically abusive behaviours were that this could not be compelled and within the case files reviewed there was insufficient threshold to escalate to care proceedings.
- 9.9 Another frequently recurring theme where there was identified domestic abuse was with the mother forming a new relationship at a later period with someone who also presented with domestically abusive behaviour. The mother had engaged with supports provided to build safety into their relationship choices prior to WBC involvement ending, but this had unfortunately not prevented them from forming a relationship with another perpetrator of domestic abuse.
- 9.10 There was unanimous agreement to end the previous period of CP planning by all the professionals working with the family and the average length of time they remained open under CIN prior to closure was 5 months. Procedurally in WBC the requirement is for a period of at least 3 months within CIN.
- 9.11 No escalations were required for concerns relating to safeguarding/the safety of the children from the audits. All practice was felt to currently be appropriate to identified need.

Points for reflection as a result of the learning from this audit were:

- When working with parents where domestic abuse is a factor this should include awareness raising of how this may contribute to children staying out of the family home; to be always forward thinking within our assessments and plans around children – how might this situation impact upon each child in the future?
 - Where domestic abuse is a factor alongside other factors of concern analysis should include how these may correlate/counteract.
- 9.12 The learning from this audit was shared within the Children Services Performance & QA Meeting to inform practice.

10. Comparator of the duration of child protection plans against the National figures:

10.1. Percentage of children ceasing CP plans nationally 2022:



Extract of fig 64, p.82: [ADCS Safeguarding Pressures Phase 8 Full Report FINAL.pdf](#)

10.2. Percentage of children ceasing CP plans in West Berkshire over this period:

CP	8 (16)	10 (13)	40.5 (38.5)	35 (28)	10 (4.5)
	> 3 months	3 – 6 months	6mths – 1 year	1 – 2 years	Over 2 years

10.3. Whilst the number of children subject to a CP plan in excess of a year has increased in WBC, the percentages of children within each of these time periods remains relatively aligned with the most recent data within the ADCS Phase 8 Safeguarding Pressure Report's findings.

10.4. The outcome of RCPCs held over this period was:

- 294 (474) children remained subject to a CP plan
- 185 (303) children stepped down to child in need
- 34 (13) children became children in care

(Numbers are higher than the number of RCPCs held as some children within the family network had a different outcome to their sibling).

11. Categories:

11.1. Latest national figures:

As a snapshot, on 31 March 2024 the breakdown of reasons for children being made subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP) in England was as follows:

- 51% (49) neglect
- 37% (37) emotional abuse
- 7% (7) physical abuse
- 3.5% (4) sexual abuse
- 2% (2) multiple

(Source: [Children in need, Reporting year 2024 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#))

- 11.2. The table below provides a breakdown of the number and percentage of children sitting under each category within West Berkshire. The predominant category used within West Berkshire is emotional harm, this has been subject to previous audit where it was established the descriptions given in relation to domestic abuse within each category of harm led to this being used in preference to the category of neglect and often it is accompanied by a secondary category of risk of physical harm.

	CP Plan reason by age group	Total no. of children per category	No. as a percentage
31st March 2025 (snapshot)	Neglect	67 (52)	32% (27)
	Emotional Abuse	114 (107)	55% (56)
	Physical Abuse	17 (26)	8% (4)
	Sexual Abuse	10 (7)	5% (4)

11.3. Secondary (dual) Categories:

The use of dual categories was introduced in West Berkshire towards the end of 2018 to provide ability to ensure that this was not being overlooked and to test the hypotheses that where risk of sexual and physical harm was present, it might not have been the primary concern. 285 (176) children have been made subject to a CP plan under dual categories over this period. Having dual categories provides greater understanding of how risk is being applied and acts as assurance that, whilst physical and sexual harm may not be the predominant concern within the family, risk continues to be monitored and is not being overlooked.

No. of Children	Main Category:	Secondary Category:
2 (2)	Sexual Abuse	Emotional harm
1 (1)	Sexual Abuse	Neglect
57 (46)	Emotional Harm	Physical Abuse
9 (6)	Emotional Harm	Neglect
7 (5)	Emotional Harm	Sexual Abuse
14 (1)	Neglect	Emotional Harm
6 (1)	Neglect	Physical Harm
1 (0)	Neglect	Sexual Harm
18 (25)	Physical Harm	Emotional Harm

12. Timeliness of Conferences:

- 12.1. There was a total of 404 (531) child protection conferences held during this period, (data is per family and not per child), this equates to 8.5 (11) conferences being held per week.

12.2. Within this number a total of 129 (150) conferences needed to be rescheduled, which impacted at times upon capacity to maintain the timeliness of them over this period:

*Please note the total number of identified issues within this table may be higher than the number of instances conferences were late due to the delay being as a result of multiple factors:		
	ICPC	Review CPC
Timeliness of the meeting	75% (85%)	84% (92%)
No of conferences held	129 (95)	275 (394)
Number of conferences rescheduled:	34 (27)	97 (123)
Number held outside the statutory timeframe	32 (26)	44 (53)
Reason for the delay in holding the conference (Some conferences had multiple reasons and so the overall figure in this section may be higher than the numbers above)	9 (6) – no CPC capacity (all held within 3 days of due date)	25 (49) – late social work report
	6 (8) – late social work report	25 (21) – Parental Availability - illness/in labour/did not arrive/child ill/in court/new job
	6 (2) – Parents unable to attend	13 (14) CP Chair availability – illness/capacity
	3 (0) CP Chair ill – all held within 5 days of due date)	10 (23) – social worker availability – Court/Annual Leave/illness/capacity
	2 (0) threshold not initially established	9 (13) moved to ensure key professionals were present
	1 (0) invitation list not received from SW in time	5 (0) Brought forward due to change – risk reduced/SO in place
	1 (1) School holidays, moved to ensure they were present	5 – delayed for legal advice or update from Court
		2 (0) no interpreter arranged
		1 (0) delayed to maintain same chair in sibling group

- 12.3. Where appropriate Issues resolutions have been raised by the Child Protection Chairs to address the factors which led to the conferences being delayed and this is explored in more detail later in this report.
- 12.4. The factors listed within the above table reflect the challenges being experienced, not just within the social work teams, but within QAAS and other agencies in relation to capacity and the recruitment and retention of staff.
- 12.5. When a conference is rescheduled this involves a repeat of the processes used to set it up, effectively doubling the work of the business support administrators within QAAS who manage this side of the work.

13. Timeliness of Visits to Children by the SW Teams and sharing of reports for conference:

- 13.1 An average of 87% (93) of SW reports for ICPCs and 88% (84) of SW reports for review CP conferences were shared within procedural timeframes prior to the CP conference over this period. Timeliness of reports for ICPCs over this period has reduced in comparison to last year, but the timeliness of reports for RCPCs is showing an improving picture.
- 13.2 On average 80% (78) of children on CP plans were visited within the last 10 days over this period. This is again showing an improving picture in comparison to the previous period. As previously mentioned in this report some of the drop is a recording issue because of workload demands and staffing changes. Where they haven't occurred on time, this has been challenged by the CP Chair.
- 13.3 The absence of recordings however would impact upon overall assessments and understanding of the progress of work being completed and the service manager for Family Safeguarding has been continuing to work with her team managers to track visiting and to ensure visits are always recorded.
- 13.4 The quality of the social worker's reports is generally of a good standard, the following is a breakdown of the grades given by the CP Chairs:
- Outstanding 10
 - Good 647
 - Requires Improvement 79
 - Inadequate 6

14. Demographics:

Gender	As of 31 st March 2025 (snapshot)	As a percentage:
Female	86 (89)	41.5% (46)
Male	115 (98)	55% (51)
Unknown	7 (5)	3.5% (3%)

- 14.1. A slightly higher proportion of male children are brought to conference in comparison to females. Where it has been recorded that the gender was unknown, this relates to unborn babies on child protection plans.

14.2. **Comparator of gender against the identified factors within all the conferences held between 1/4/23 and 31/3/24:**

(Percentages are worked out as a percentage against the factors identified within every conference held, then per gender)

FACTOR:	Parental Domestic Abuse	Parental Drug Misuse	Parental Alcohol Misuse	Parental Mental Ill Health	Parental Disability	Parental Learning Difficulty	Financial Hardship	Housing Issues
GENDER								
Female	61% (49)	34% (50)	28% (60)	56% (50)	6% (75)	5% (33)	20% (52)	32% (50)
Male	57% (51)	34% (50)	27% (40)	60% (50)	6% (25)	10% (67)	23% (48)	28% (50)
Percentage rate of factor within conferences overall	58% (61)	30% (30)	27% (25)	58% (45)	6% (3)	8% (4)	21% (13)	30% (23)

FACTOR:	Young Person School Attendance	Young Person Mental Health	Young Person Behaviour at Home School	Young Person Offending or Anti Social Behaviour	Young Person with Disability	Young Person with Learning Difficulty	Young Person vulnerable to or experiencing sexual exploitation
GENDER:							
Female	33% (53)	31% (54)	28% (50)	7% (57)	3% (31)	3% (29)	6% (53)
Male	27% (47)	23% (46)	27% (50)	5% (43)	5% (69)	4% (71)	5% (47)
Percentage rate of factor within conferences overall	30% (29)	27% (18)	27% (23)	6% (8)	4% (5)	3% (4)	6% (8)

- 14.3. The parents of 25% of the children and young people with an identified factor of mental health difficulties also had identified mental health difficulties.

- 14.4. The percentage of each of the identified factors was relatively evenly split across the genders, although whilst a small cohort boys had a higher incidence of parental learning disability in comparison to the girls.
- 14.5. The trio of vulnerabilities remain the most predominant identified factors within child protection conferences.
- 14.6. **Ages of children on CP plans:**

Nationally:

The ages of children receiving social care support has changed over the years. The age profile of children becoming subjects of child protection plans has continued to shift towards older children. 4.4% of children starting a plan were aged 16 and 17 years compared to 3.9% two years ago. 5.4% of children subject of a child protection plan as at 31st March 2022 were aged 16 years and over compared to 4.7% two years ago.

[ADCS Safeguarding Pressures Phase 8 Full Report FINAL.pdf](#)

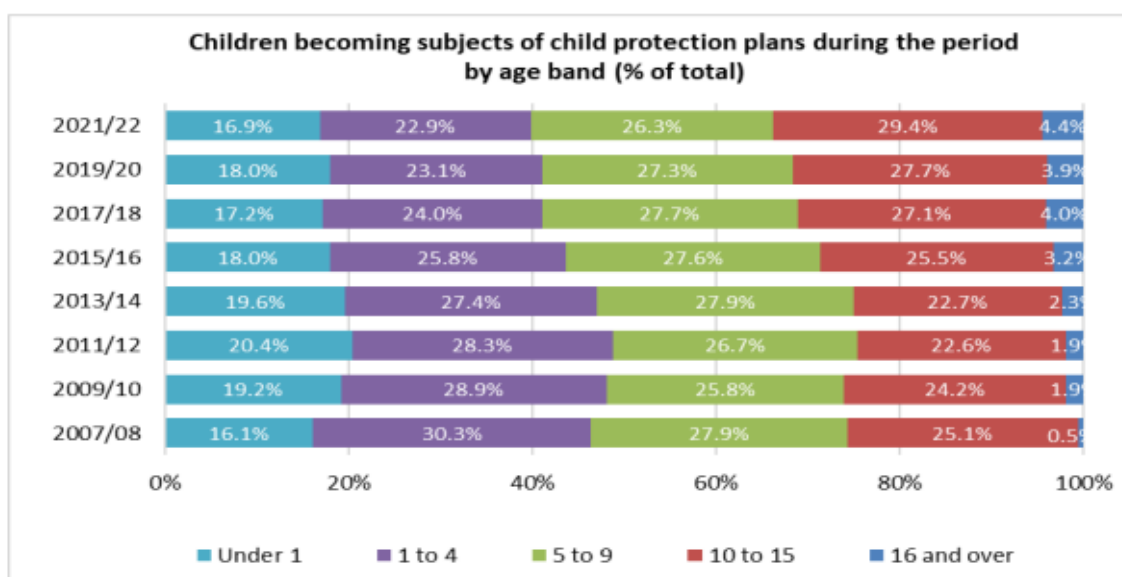


Figure 60: Children becoming subjects of child protection plans during the period by age banding - % of the total
(Source: SGP respondents)

[ADCS Safeguarding Pressures Phase 8 Full Report FINAL.pdf](#)

West Berkshire age breakdown: (Snapshot 31/03/24):

Under 1	1 – 4 years	5 to 9 years	10 to 15 years	16+
12.5% (9.5%)	20% (22.5%)	28% (32%)	33% (31%)	6% (5%)

The ages of children on CP plans in West Berkshire is generally in line with the ADCS 2021/22 National figures. However West Berkshire has had a smaller percentage of

children under the age of 1 year and over 16 years of age subject to a CP plan over this period in comparison to the National figures.

CP Plan Reason by age group	Under 1	1 to 4	5 to 9	10 to 15	16 and over
Sexual Abuse	0	3	3	3	1
Neglect	16	10	19	19	3
Emotional Abuse	8	23	32	44	9
Physical Abuse	2	6	4	3	0
Total	26	42	58	69	13

Neglect is the predominant factor of concern for children under the age of 1yrs whereas in all other age ranges the concerns relate predominantly to emotional harm.

14.7. Ethnicity:

Ethnicity in West Berkshire

According to the latest 2021 census, the population in West Berkshire is predominantly white (91.9%), with non-white minorities representing the remaining 8.1% of the population.

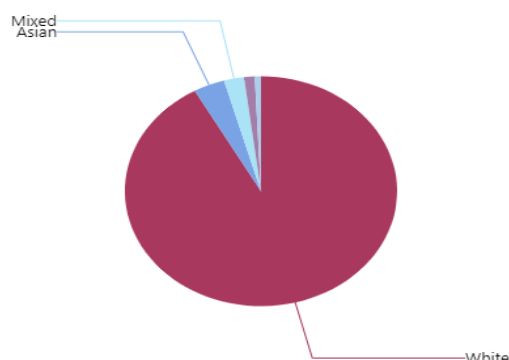
Asian people were the largest minority group in West Berkshire accounting for 3.7% of the population.

2,030 or 1% of the West Berkshire population are black according to the latest 2021 census.

In England more broadly the portion of the population that is white is 81%. 10% are Asian and 4% are Black.

Population by race in West Berkshire, 2021 census

- **White** - 148,384 people or 91.9%
- **Asian** - 5,990 people or 3.7%
- **Mixed** - 3,857 people or 2.4%
- **Black** - 2,030 people or 1.3%
- **Other** - 1,186 people or 0.7%



[West Berkshire Demographics | Age, Ethnicity, Religion, Wellbeing \(varbes.com\)](https://varbes.com/)

14.8. Snapshot: 87% (80) of children and young people subject to a child protection plan as of 31st March 2025 were of White British origin. The percentage of children and young people subject to a child protection plan from minority ethnic

groups was 13% (20). This is a higher rate than the percentage of children from an ethnic minority background overall within West Berkshire although the school census puts the number of school age children from BAME backgrounds at 12%, which is more aligned.

15. Participation:

15.1. Participation & multi agency work with children and families within Child Protection Conferences:

15.2 The Berkshire Child Protection procedures require all professionals invited to attend child protection conferences to do so, and if they are unable to do so they are required to send a suitably briefed representative in their place. Attendance by professionals has generally though been good.

15.3 All professionals invited to conferences are required to provide a report, which has been shared with the family and the CP Chair at least 2 working days (for ICPCs) or 5 working days (for RCPCs) prior to the date of the conference being held. Whilst reports are generally sent into the Chair in time, they can be late arriving with the family and there has been occasions where they have not been shared at all, when this happens it delays the start of the meeting because the family need time to go through the report. The quality of the reports is generally good.

15.4 There are only a small number of incidences when a professional has not attended or provided a report for conference. When the CP Chairs identify practice issues they will pick this up with the relevant agency to ensure it is addressed and some occasions where this has occurred is explored later in this report. School Nursing and the GPs tend to only come to ICPCs unless they have an ongoing role and so the data below is focused solely upon these meetings.

Agency:	School	Early Years	School Nurse (ICPC only)	Health Visitor	Midwife	GP (ICPC only)
Did not attend	50 7%	39 17%	49 22%	79 16%	29 31%	191 83%
Did not attend or provide a report	33	22	15	29	24	58
Report late to Chair	7	8	19	0	1	4
Report late to family	29	32	113	76	22	65
Quality of the report provided:						
Outstanding	0	0	0	12	0	0

Good	167	187	215	417	70	144
Requires Improvement	4	4	3	0	0	18
Inadequate	0	0	0	0	0	0

15.5 There was a lack of clarity within the Pan Berkshire CP Procedures during the last reporting period as to whose role it is to share professional's reports for conference. Practice guidance is now clear that it is the author of the report who has this responsibility.

15.6 Generally the quality of professional's reports for conference are good and they are provided to the Chair in a timely manner.

Police attendance within conferences:

15.7 The Police representatives are always invited to attend ICPCs, but do not generally attend review child protection conferences. This is generally because only those professionals with an active role, or where they might contribute, are included within the reviews and the Police often do not have an ongoing role. Where they do attend this is usually because there is an ongoing investigation and the officer in the case is invited to attend.

15.8 Currently the WBC ICS reports do not capture Police attendance data, but it is anticipated that this will be rectified when WBC move to a different ICS system. In the meantime, QAAS has been manually recording this information post the conferences:

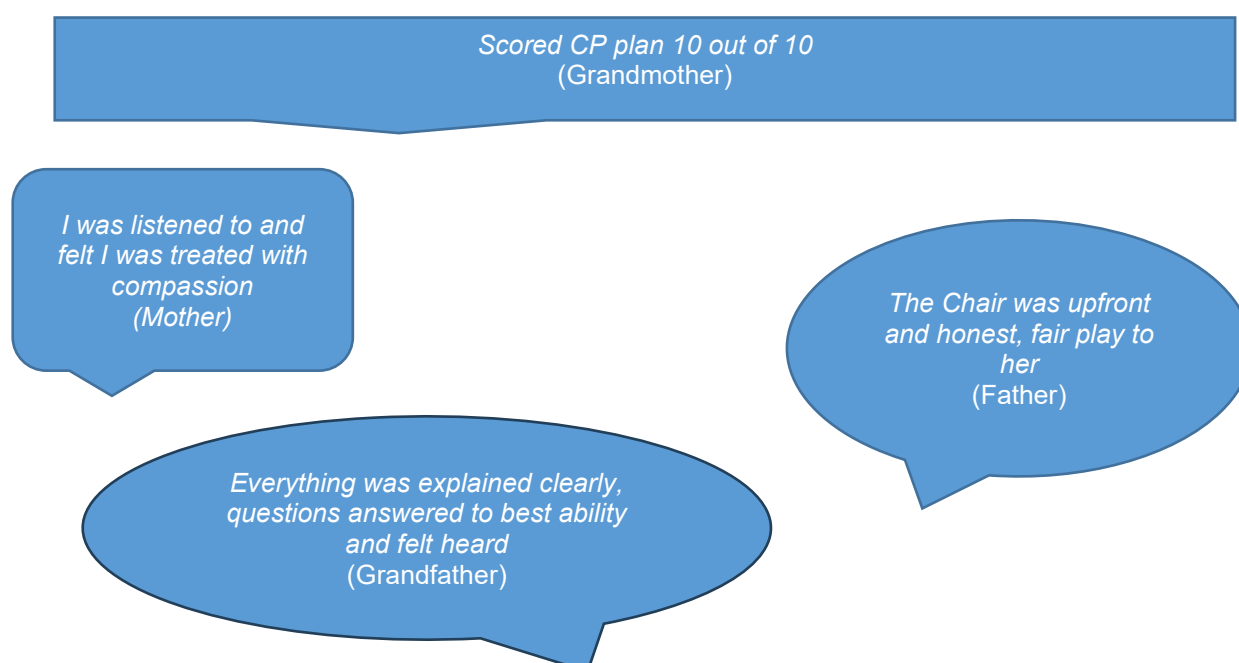
Meeting type:	ICPC	RCPC
Number of Meetings held where Police were invited to attend	129	Not known
Number of meetings held where the Police attended	112	17 (34)
No of meetings where Police were invited to but did not attend	17 13% (23)	Not known

15.9 The Police are again currently reporting significant capacity difficulties at present, their Case Conference Advisors (CCA) are centrally based and cover the entire Thames Valley area (Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire).

15.10 Despite this their level of attendance at ICPCs has improved over this period. Police would not usually attend RCPCs unless they have a defined role and they are recorded as having attended 17 RCPCs over this period.

16. Parental participation within conferences:

- 16.1 The child(ren)'s mother has been present within 92% (89) of conferences held, with fathers having been present within 66% (68). The lower attendance rate with fathers may be due to working hours (conferences are held during working hours). The parent's partner attended 4% (7) of the conferences held.
- 16.2 Extended family members were recorded as having attended within 24% (28) of the conferences held. Levels of feedback from family members are relatively low. The focus of practice development for QAAS over the next period is participation and we intend to review how feedback is received and reported upon with the aim of improving this over the next period. The following is a sample of some of the feedback received from families:



Adult advocacy:

- 16.3 Adult advocacy was provided for parents within 125 conferences over this period.

17. Child Participation and Consultation within CP Conferences:

- 17.1 The voice of the child is central in the information sharing and decision-making process. Whilst some children/young people feel able to share their views independently, those who do not feel able to do this are offered advocacy to ensure they feel listened to and that their views are accurately recorded and shared.
- 17.2 Where appropriate, children and young people involved within conferences are supported to attend and contribute. 94 (78) children and young people were recorded as having attended their child protection conferences over this period,

which is a further increase in comparison to the following period which had also seen an increase from 57 to 78.

The children thought you were a very nice professional, they said they felt included and supported.

(Children via their SW)

18. Child Advocacy:

18.1. The rights of each child to be provided with advocacy support in respect of making a complaint is set out within:

- The Children Act 1989 (s24D and s26).
- Adoption and Children Act 2002.
- The Advocacy Services and Representations Procedure (Children) (Amendment) Regulations 2004. Guidance: Providing Effective Advocacy Services for Children and Young People making a complaint under the Children Act 1989.

“Domestic legislation in England does not grant children and young people a universal entitlement to independent advocacy when they need it. The default assumption is that most children live within protective familial structures and that, if the need arises, families should be able to advocate on children’s behalf…… (However, it should be provided for)… children and young people in receipt of social care services (including child protection) who wish to make a representation.”

(Children’s Commissioner 2024)

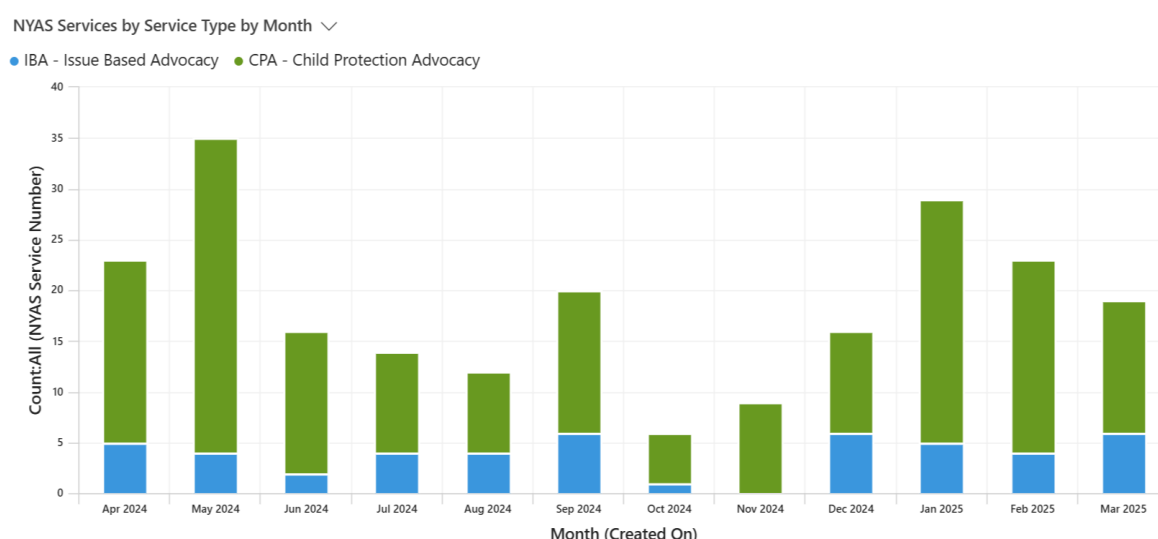
18.2. Formal advocacy for children and young people in WBC is provided via the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS). It is the provision of this service the data in the following table relates to. Providing a child with an advocate gives them the opportunity to speak to somebody with no connection to them, or the CP process, and to provide feedback and have a voice in decisions and plans being made about them.

18.3. The CP Chair’s report captures why NYAS advocates were not used within the conferences for children and young people. From 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025 there were a total of 445 (404) occasions when children did not have an advocate for their conference and the reasons recorded by CP Chairs for this are set out below:

(numbers are higher than number of conferences as this is per child and not family as is the case within most aspects of this report)

No Advocate Offered to Child Reason	
No referral made	157
One was not available	30
Other	44
Refused by child	22
Refused by parent/carer	24
Too young	140
Unable to identify interpreter	2
Unborn	26
Total	445

- 18.4. The number of children who were recorded by the CP Chairs as not having been referred for advocacy over this period has increased. There has been increased demand for advocacy over this period and so many children were supported to have a voice via other means, such as discussion with the CP Chair or via a family support worker, school pastoral support or via a named person of trust identified by the child themselves. The prevalence of this has not been captured. However, the Child Protection Chairs raise an issue resolution where a child/young person has not had advocacy support provided when it has been requested and this is kept under review within conferences.
- 18.5. The advocacy provision has also now been increased to ensure there is wider availability for it.



- 18.6. As can be seen from the above table, the largest area of take up for advocacy support is within the child protection conference arena.
- 18.7. The following is a sample of the feedback the advocacy provider, NYAS, has received in relation to their work with our children and young people:

When you read out the report, I can hear the YP, it sounds just like them.

The voice of the children has really helped me to come to the decision I have to step down to CIN.
(Professional)

that was a lovely report"
"For a young man that is so closed to talking you managed to get so much from him"
(Professional)

YP thanked me for my work with him and expressed that he feels he can trust me and confide in me
(advocate from child)

at first I wasn't sure what was going on and I was confused, now I am really happy and it was nice to be able to talk to you.
(child)

It was lovely that she opened up so much to you -
thank you
(professional)

19. Feedback about the conferences:

- 19.1. QAAS welcomes feedback from all sources and this is received from a variety of avenues. For CP conferences at present the predominant form of receiving feedback is through feedback documents completed by attendees at the end of each conference. 313 (194) people provided feedback using these documents over this period. The following is a representative example of feedback received over this period from professionals in attendance:

Very clear, well thought through and done in collaboration with the parent
(Clinical Psychologist, CAMHS)

Balanced conference focusing on the needs of the children
(Health Visitor)



- 19.2. Feedback has been predominantly positive in relation to how child protection conferences are being managed.
- 19.3. However, all feedback is reviewed by the relevant CP Chair post conference and read by the QAAS Service Manager. Where necessary the CP Chair will undertake follow up calls to discuss the feedback provided and where relevant this is fed back across QAAS as part of ongoing learning and development within the Service. There have been a small number of issues raised within the feedback received with the following actions taken:

Feedback received:	Action taken:
The meeting started 25 minutes late, but it was not clear why there was this delay, whilst waiting on TEAMS for the meeting to start. (CAMHS)	This was unfortunate. The parents had not seen all the reports provided prior to the day of the meeting, they elected to go ahead with the meeting, but it was important they were given adequate time to read and digest the reports before the meeting commenced.

<p>Parents did not feel heard and felt unable to put their point of view across. They feel most of the concerns are educational needs and not down to their parenting and that unrealistic goals have been set for the children.</p>	<p>The parents were provided with an adult advocate to assist them in having a voice in the conferences and this was sent in after the meeting. They do not agree that a CP plan is required. Every effort is being made to ensure their views are included and considered as part of the ongoing planning.</p> <p>The parent's view is sought and discussed within the pre-meeting with them with the support of the adult advocate and the chair is ensuring their views are included within the conferences.</p>
<p>I don't like teams, professionals should attend in person, very poor representation from (X) agency (Team Manager)</p>	<p>TEAMS is only used where unavoidable and required to achieve attendance from a particular professional. External challenge was raised by the CP chair to this agency and the issue was addressed. Fortunately, all agencies invited to conferences are aware of the importance of attending and participating face to face and generally this is achieved.</p>
<p>Would be good to have been involved at the initial conference - any others that may be needed to be invited (teacher for the hearing impaired)</p>	<p>The teacher was unhappy not to have been invited to the ICPC initially by the allocated SW. However, the school and pre-school for both children were there and they were in the process of transitioning to new schools - this was subsequently rectified and they are now a part of the core group and conferences. Their input was really helpful and reinforced what the schools had been saying.</p>
<p>Father was allowed to be hostile to professionals within the conference (midwife)</p>	<p>The father was annoyed to be accused of being domestically abusive and stated this in the meeting, this was not directed at anyone in particular. The chair had noticed the children's father was covertly recording the meeting, the chair spoke to the father about his behaviour which had caused upset for some of the professionals present who were unhappy he had been covertly recording them and refused permission</p>

	for him to do this. He apologised to all present for his behaviour.
Police non-attendance was an issue since mum denied the information in their reports completely (social worker)	It was unfortunate the Police were not there, this was subsequently picked up with them by the Chair after the meeting and highlights the importance of professionals attending conferences to speak to their reports.
I was not able to give a view about the plan stepping down as the child became emotionally heightened and I left the room with them. It would have been better to prepare X more for the purpose of the meeting and for his views to be captured in a more structured way. (Youth Justice social worker)	This as an RCPC/CIC meeting and assumptions were made by the Chair about preparations having been made ahead of the meeting. The chair agreed with the view of this professional. There should have been better preparation. The meeting was ended and re-scheduled to take place on a different date. The learning from this was discussed with the child's allocated social worker and team manager. The IRO asked for an advocate for the child to be organised and visited to speak to the child prior to the day of the re-arranged meeting.

- 19.4. The QAAS service manager has continued to undertake staff practice observations and whilst less have been achieved over this period due to capacity issues, the quality of practice observed in relation to the CP Chairs has remained consistent.
- 19.5. When meetings have online attendees the CP Chairs will check if they believe an online participant may not be giving the meeting their full attendance and address the situation particularly if there are people potentially within earshot of the meeting. The use of laptops within meetings is also being tightly managed, with laptop use only being permitted for participants to access their reports for reference when they are presenting their information.

20. Issues Resolutions (IR) raised by the CP Chair over this period:

A total of 85 (69) quality assurance issues were raised in relation to children and young people who were subject to CP Plans, this is an increase of 23% (40) in comparison to the previous period. QAAS endeavours to raise IRs and to resolve them at the informal level or at stage 1. When they are raised higher this is usually due to the response not being received within the set timescale or because there was a need for that level of seniority to have oversight and to redress the issues the CP Chair has raised.

When an IR is raised there is a 5 working day timescale for the manager in

receipt of the IR to respond before it is escalated to the next stage. The purpose of this is to avoid delay in the issues raised being resolved.

Stage raised:	Number raised	Number of these which were escalated and stage they were escalated to.
Informal (line manager for SW)	34 (27)	All were resolved at this stage.
Stage 1 (Team Manager)	44 (35)	3 progressed to stage 2.
Stage 2 (Service Manager)	10 (6)	7 IRs were raised directly as stage 2. All bar 1 were resolved at this stage. One escalated to stage 3 due to no response from the social work manager within the prescribed timescale.
Stage 3 (Service Director)	1 (1)	No IRs were raised at this level over this period. 1 was escalated from stage 2 as described above.
Stage 4 (Executive Director)	0 (0)	No IRs were raised at this level over this period.

A full breakdown of the reason why IRs were raised is attached in appendix 2 of this report. The Children & Family Service hold monthly performance meetings, chaired by the Service Director. The purpose of this meeting is to monitor the quality and timeliness of practice and to put steps into place to address identified concerns. There is evidence of the effectiveness of this board in that the frequency of IRs being repeatedly raised has reduced, particularly in relation to missing visits and core groups, which has significantly dropped.

The frequency of families receiving reports for conference late has also seen a reduction in occurrence. There has been a small number of IRs raised over this period in relation to how reports are being shared with parents. Whilst not specifically stated within the CP procedures, good practice would dictate that the allocated social worker visits the family to go through their report with them prior to the conference. This would provide the family with an opportunity to request factual inaccuracies where necessary and to challenge some of the content and avoid this playing out within the conferences. The CP Chairs are reporting anecdotally that reports are often being shared electronically, the IRs raised relate to parents who have advised they were unable to read the reports as a result of this practice.

All the IRs were resolved and action taken to address the identified issues. It should be noted that many of the IRs raised in relation to visiting and core groups was explained to be a recording issue, which was rectified. Without a record of the visits, the CP Chairs are compelled to consider these in the same way as a missed visit because they cannot contribute to the ongoing work and assessment being undertaken with children and their families.

The breadth of the IRs raised over this period demonstrate the depth of monitoring the Chairs undertake within the cases they hold. Often the CP Chair has been the consistent professional involved within a child's family and this has been a key factor in keeping children sighted and plans on track over this period.

19 Feedback from the Child Protection Chairs:

The CP chairs always try to ensure that good practice is recognised and that this is fed back to the relevant professional. Often this takes place verbally, immediately after the conferences, but the following are some examples of particularly good practice, which the Chair wanted line managers of the professionals involved to know:

The social worker was very clear in her presentation in the meeting and child focussed; positive interactions with the family and explaining the worries and rationale for decision making in a respectful, empathetic and family friendly way. In my view, her excellent practice has contributed to the success and good outcome for (child) and the family and has made their experience of working with the department positive be. (CP Chair to SW)

The school and mum mentioned your name as part of the support and how positive your work is with (child). It was a positive conversation and I thought demonstrated really good joined up work with the school, family and yourself.
(CP Chair to EWO)

I was impressed with your support to mum, which enabled her to participate in the meeting not only in terms of helping her to keep calm and focussed on the issues at hand, but also sharing information on her behalf based on your work and knowledge of the family.

(CP Chair to SW)

The positive relationship you have managed to establish with the parents, has supported mum to make the most of the support offered to her, which she was able to recognise; this is a big point as she was also able to reflect, she had not been able to so do in the past. Your work has enabled them to engage in open and challenging discussions in the conference, more so they were able to acknowledge what could be seen as shortcomings/negatives.

(CP Chair to SW)

I just wanted noted as I walked mother out to the main office following the review she commented on how helpful (SW) had been and how supported she had felt by her. She said she was dreading the child protection process, but for her on reflection it had been a positive process.

(CP Chair to SW)

20 Recommended Actions:

Action	Who:	When by:
QAAS to continue to work with the Participation Officer to develop updated consultation documentation and review how feedback is obtained from children and young people, particularly those who have attended their CP conferences and the number of children providing feedback might be improved.	The QAAS Service and the Children's Participation Officer	31 st October 2025
Audit of children subject to CP plans to explore involvement of the child's father within the process	CS Management Team as part of the dip audit programme	30 th September 2025
Family Safeguarding to review how oversight is maintained on the progression of plans when there are changes of SW to avoid drift/delay.	Sonia Harris, Service Manager, FS	30 th August 2025
Social Care Reforms around Lead Safeguarding Practitioners Role will be developed this year	QAAS Service Manager	March 2026

Appendix 1: Factors identified within Child Protection Conferences between 2019 and 2023:

2019/20:

Parental Domestic Abuse	Parental Drug Misuse	Parental Alcohol Misuse	Parental Mental ill Health	Parental Disability	Parental Learning Difficulty	Financial Hardship	Housing Issues	Young Person School Attendance	Young Person Mental Health	Young Person Behaviour at Home School	Young Person Offending or Anti Social Behaviour	Young Person with Disability	Young Person with Learning Difficulty	Young Person vulnerable to or experiencing sexual exploitation	Other
318	110	108	253	9	35	68	140	132	120	110	43	28	16	34	110
55.4%	19.2%	18.8%	44.1%	1.6%	6.1%	11.8%	24.4%	23.0%	20.9%	19.2%	7.5%	4.9%	2.8%	5.9%	19.2%

2020/21:

Parental Domestic Abuse	Parental Drug Misuse	Parental Alcohol Misuse	Parental Mental ill Health	Parental Disability	Parental Learning Difficulty	Financial Hardship	Housing Issues	Young Person School Attendance	Young Person Mental Health	Young Person Behaviour at Home School	Young Person Offending or Anti Social Behaviour	Young Person with Disability	Young Person with Learning Difficulty	Young Person vulnerable to or experiencing sexual exploitation	Other
384	161	156	295	5	37	52	91	120	102	109	43	20	17	25	100
61.3%	25.7%	24.9%	47.1%	0.8%	5.9%	8.3%	14.5%	19.2%	16.3%	17.4%	6.9%	3.2%	2.7%	4.0%	16.0%

2021/22:

Parental Domestic Abuse	Parental Drug Misuse	Parental Alcohol Misuse	Parental Mental ill Health	Parental Disability	Parental Learning Difficulty	Financial Hardship	Housing Issues	Young Person School Attendance	Young Person Mental Health	Young Person Behaviour at Home School	Young Person Offending or Anti Social Behaviour	Young Person with Disability	Young Person with Learning Difficulty	Young Person vulnerable to or experiencing sexual exploitation	Other
379	170	153	373	19	26	55	132	134	92	133	62	34	18	38	140
54.4%	24.4%	22.0%	53.5%	2.7%	3.7%	7.9%	18.9%	19.2%	13.2%	19.1%	8.9%	4.9%	2.6%	5.5%	20.1%

2022/23:

Parental Domestic Abuse	Parental Drug Misuse	Parental Alcohol Misuse	Parental Mental ill Health	Parental Disability	Parental Learning Difficulty	Financial Hardship	Housing Issues	Young Person School Attendance	Young Person Mental Health	Young Person Behaviour at Home School	Young Person Offending or Anti Social Behaviour	Young Person with Disability	Young Person with Learning Difficulty	Young Person vulnerable to or experiencing sexual exploitation	Other
479	195	206	411	15	31	129	205	228	144	200	68	42	32	58	179
62.6%	25.5%	26.9%	53.7%	2.0%	4.1%	16.9%	26.8%	29.8%	18.8%	26.1%	8.9%	5.5%	4.2%	7.6%	23.4%

2023/24:

Parental Domestic Abuse	Parental Drug Misuse	Parental Alcohol Misuse	Parental Mental ill Health	Parental Disability	Parental Learning Difficulty	Financial Hardship	Housing Issues	Young Person School Attendance	Young Person Mental Health	Young Person Behaviour at Home School	Young Person Offending or Anti Social Behaviour	Young Person with Disability	Young Person with Learning Difficulty	Young Person vulnerable to or experiencing sexual exploitation	Other
517	258	225	397	32	45	145	211	260	160	184	75	45	39	67	158
63.0%	31.5%	27.4%	48.4%	3.9%	5.5%	17.7%	25.7%	31.7%	19.5%	22.4%	9.1%	5.5%	4.8%	8.2%	19.3%

2024/25:

Parental Domestic Abuse	Parental Drug Misuse	Parental Alcohol Misuse	Parental Mental ill Health	Parental Disability	Parental Learning Difficulty	Financial Hardship	Housing Issues	Young Person School Attendance	Young Person Mental Health	Young Person Behaviour at Home School	Young Person Offending or Anti Social Behaviour	Young Person with Disability	Young Person with Learning Difficulty	Young Person vulnerable to or experiencing sexual exploitation	Other
453	258	212	449	43	61	163	228	227	205	210	49	32	26	43	233
58.4%	33.2%	27.3%	57.9%	5.5%	7.9%	21.0%	29.4%	29.3%	26.4%	27.1%	6.3%	4.1%	3.4%	5.5%	30.0%

Appendix 2:**Reason why an Issues Resolutions was raised:**

(numbers below are higher than the overall number of IRs raised because the IRs have been raised for a multiple of issues)

Stage raised:	Informal	Stage 1:	Stage 2:
Issue raised:	Frequency of occurrence:	Frequency of occurrence:	Frequency of occurrence:
Visits out of timescales/missing from file recordings	10 (37)	12 (1)	2 (0) (1 escalated to stage 2 due to no response being received)
Delay in pre-birth assessment			2 (0)
Core groups out of timescales/missing from file recordings	5 (40)	11 (0)	1 (0)
No advocacy in place	0 (3)	4 (0)	
No chronology/chronology significantly out of date	9 (15)	9 (0)	
Father not assessed	0	(0) 1	1 – escalated from stage 1 due to no response being received
Poor quality SW report/missing key information	2 (3)	2 (0)	1 (0)
Concerns report for conference, whilst good quality had been written by unqualified worker	0	1 (1)	1 – Chair not satisfied with the response received & escalated to stage 2
Late report/not shared with parents	10 (18) – includes 3 (5) instances where father not living at home wasn't	12 (0)	1 (0)

	sent the report		
Key professionals not invited		3 (0)	
No interpreter arranged		1 (0)	
CP Chair not notified of significant event		1 (0)	
Key information/event not in report and delay in acting		4 (0)	
No allocated SW	0 (8)		
Delay in actions within the CP plan being progressed	2 (4)	4	1 (0)
Parents & professionals not aware of key info before conference		1 (0)	
Changes of SW impacting upon progress			3 (0)
Delay in seeking legal advice/action/move to PLO	4 (4)	2 (1)	3 (0) (1 escalated from stage 2 due to no response being received)
Lack of evidence of management oversight	1 (4)	2 (0)	
CIN process post CP procedure not followed	0 (3)		
Challenging the legal status of the child's living arrangements	1 (2)	1 (1)	1 – Chair not satisfied with the response received & escalated to stage 2
SW report e-mailed and parents couldn't access it	4 (0)		
Lack of challenge of partners who are not attending core groups	1 (0)		
Case file recordings on transfer of child to OLA missing	1 (0)		
No receiving SW at ICPC	1 (0)		
Questioning why work on DA hadn't been commenced by SW whilst waiting for DA worker availability	1 (0)		
CP plan not updated for RCPC	1 (0)	4 (0)	

Invitation list for conference late which delayed conference	1 (0)		
IRs raised against partner agencies:			
Non-attendance in CP conference and/or no report provided – VIA, New Barn School, Probation, Nursery, GP & CAMHS – specific professionals	7 (2)	0 (1) CAMHS 4 CMHT 1 Housing 2 SEN 1 School 1 Police	1 escalation from stage 1 due to no response being received - CAMHS
Late sharing of reports with families – professional challenge made in conference to numerous agencies by the CP Chair	4 conferences		

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Child Protection Annual Report 2024-25

Committee considering report:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Date of Committee:	11 September 2025
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Heather Codling
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	12 June 2025
Report Author:	Nicola Robertson

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This is Child Protection Annual Report
- 1.2 To report upon the performance of services for children and young people subject to a child protection plan between 1st April 2024 and 31st March 2025, providing breakdown and commentary regarding the quality of practice within West Berkshire's child protection conference process and to make recommendations for any required remedial action.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 For Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to be informed of Child Protection Activity over the last financial year 2024-2025.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	No financial implications, this is an Annual Report
Human Resource:	No HR implications, this is an Annual Report
Legal:	There are no Legal implication from this Annual Report. The report does ensure compliance with statutory duties under the Children Act 1989, Working together to Safeguard Children 2023, and other legislation.
Risk Management:	There are no Risk Management Implications, this is an Annual Report

	The report does ensure compliance with statutory duties under the Children Act 1989, Working together to Safeguard Children 2023, and other legislation.			
Property:	There are no property implications, this is an Annual Report			
Policy:	There are no Policy implications, this is an Annual Report.			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?	x			<p>This is West Berkshire Child Protection Annual Report for 2024-2025, there are no proposed decisions required.</p> <p>To note: Practice standards and the Pan Berkshire CP Procedures ensure there is equitable experiences for children and their families within the conference process.</p> <p>Conferences are held taking account of family member needs in relation to their welfare/safety and adult and child advocacy is provided where appropriate and relevant.</p> <p>Conference venues are held within locations which can be easily accessed by all and where required interpreters are arranged to support families where English is not their first language.</p>
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	x			Annual report, therefore, no proposed decisions required
Environmental Impact:		x		No significant environmental impact identified.

Health Impact:	x			Improvement in practice will contribute to keeping children safe and improved outcomes for children and young people subject to a CP plan.
ICT Impact:		x		No significant ICT impact identified.
Digital Services Impact:		x		No significant digital services impact identified.
Council Strategy Priorities:	x			Supports priorities related to vulnerable children.
Core Business:	x			Strengthens the council's ability to meet statutory obligations and deliver high-quality services.
Data Impact:		x		No significant data impact identified.
Consultation and Engagement:	<p>There has been ongoing engagement with families and professionals attending conferences to inform service improvements.</p> <p>The primary focus of all the Child Protection Chairs is to ensure that the needs and safety of children are kept at the forefront within conferences and the voices of the child(ren) themselves are central to this and evident within all work undertaken within child protection procedures.</p> <p>This is achieved in a number of ways; encouraging and supporting children and young people to attend conferences where it is appropriate to do so and ensuring they have been provided with independent Advocacy where relevant and from feedback provided by children and other professionals attending the conferences. This feedback is included within this report.</p> <p>The information and data captured within the report evidences a clear understanding throughout the organisation of the importance of ensuring that children's views are considered and taken into account within work completed with them and their families.</p>			

4 Executive Summary

4.1 Overview

- 4.2 As of March 2025, 208 children were subject to Child Protection (CP) Plans in West Berkshire. This figure has remained stable compared to the previous year and, while still above national averages, the rate per 10,000 children is now more aligned with regional and national benchmarks.
- 4.3 The average length of time children remain on a CP plan has risen this year to one year. In response we have re-established the CP surgery led by the Service Manager for Quality Assurance and Safeguarding (QAAS) Service and the Service Manager for

Family Safeguarding to review all CP plans which have been in place in excess of a year. The aim of these reviews is to quickly identify where drift or delay maybe occurring and to ensure that CP plans are being driven through in a time way for children.

- 4.4 The percentage of children in WBC who returned to a CP plan within 2 years of the previous period of CP ending is 21% as of 31st March 2025. The England average is 13%. An audit was undertaken as a test of assurance. No escalations were required for concerns relating to safeguarding/the safety of the children from the audits. All practice was felt to currently be appropriate to identified need.
- 4.5 The most predominant category of harm used in West Berkshire is Emotional Harm and is largely due to the high number of children on CP plans in West Berkshire because of domestic abuse occurring in the home.
- 4.6 75% of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs) and 84% of Review Child Protection Conferences (RCPCs) were held within the statutory timeframe over this period, this is a drop on the previous year and is due to a number of factors, which are listed in full on page 15 of this report. The quality of the Social Worker reports for conference is largely good and they are generally shared in a timely way with families. There is a need however to ensure that they are always shared face to face.
- 4.7 There were 940 CP Chair's Report audits completed over this period and of these 73% (75%) found the standard of practice across the Child Protection Conferences by all agencies met good. Where it was identified practice did not meet good, where necessary these issues were addressed by the Chair with the relevant professional/agency. The breadth of the Issues Resolutions raised over this period demonstrate the depth of monitoring the Chairs undertake within the cases they hold. Often the CP Chair has been the consistent professional involved within a child's family and this has been a key factor in keeping children sighted and plans on track over this period.
- 4.8 Participation and engagement by parents and professionals within the conference is good and some examples of feedback received from them in relation to their experience of the conferences are provided within the body of the report. The vast majority of feedback received is positive, however where an issue is raised this is always addressed to the CP Chair's best ability. QAAS has also developed a set of practice standards for CP conferences over this period to ensure consistency of experience for families involved within this process.
- 4.9 There is very good promotion and take up of advocacy for children subject to CP plans and a small proportion of parents have also been supported by adult advocates where appropriate.

4.10 Key Themes and Learning

- 4.11 Mental health and domestic abuse continue to be the most prevalent concerns. Parental mental health was a factor in 58.1% of cases, while child mental health concerns rose to 26.9%. Domestic abuse was present in 58.5% of cases.
- 4.12 The percentage of children returning to a CP plan within two years was 21%, which is higher than the national average of 13%. Most repeat plans were linked to persistent

domestic abuse and parental vulnerabilities. Audits indicated that in 80% of these cases, repeat plans were not avoidable. The most common reason for a second CP plan was the non-abusive parent forming a new relationship with someone who also exhibited abusive behaviours.

- 4.13 Timeliness of statutory meetings has declined, with 75% of Initial CP Conferences and 84% of Review CP Conferences held within required timeframes. Delays have been predominantly due to staff sickness and timeliness of reporting. In response, the CP Surgery has been reinstated to address drift in long-standing plans.

4.14 Quality and Impact of Practice

- 4.15 A total of 940 CP Chair audits were completed, with 73% rating practice as good. Where standards were not met, CP Chairs intervened directly raising challenge. Social work practice showed that 87% of ICPC and 88% of RCPC reports were shared on time. Report quality was strong, with 88% rated as 'Good'.
- 4.16 The consistent presence and challenge from CP Chairs have been instrumental in maintaining focus on the child and driving plans forward. Thematic audits, such as those on chronologies and repeat plans, led to tangible improvements in consistency.
- 4.17 Quality Assurance and Safeguarding (QAAS) Service also introduced new practice standards to ensure a consistent experience for families.

4.18 Feedback and Participation

- 4.19 Children and families were actively engaged in the CP process. A total of 94 children attended their own CP conferences, an increase from the previous year.
- 4.20 Advocacy was provided in 125 conferences for parents and was widely promoted for children.
- 4.21 Feedback from families was overwhelmingly positive, with many reporting feeling heard, supported, and respected.
- 4.22 Professional feedback was also strong, with 313 professionals submitting responses that praised the clarity, compassion, and leadership of CP Chairs. Concerns raised, such as delays or missing professionals, were followed up and addressed.
- 4.23 QAAS continues to review and improve feedback mechanisms to ensure all voices are heard and acted upon.

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 The qualitative and quantitative data within this report evidences a breadth of good practice and improvements achieved.
- 5.2 The Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Service continues to maintain focus upon the need to ensure that the children and young people within West Berkshire achieve good outcomes and has made further improvements within how services are delivered with this aim.

5.3 Annual Report at Appendix 1

6 Other options considered

6.1 This is an Annual Report, therefore no other options considered.

7 Conclusion

7.1 West Berkshire Council has demonstrated strong performance in working with children subject to a child protection plan and their families, with plans for continued improvement.

7.2 The feedback from families and partner agencies is overwhelmingly positive.

7.3 The Service continues to audit and explore learning to ensure on going improvements are made to ensure children and young people are safe and safeguarding concerns are addressed and minimised.

7.4 For the coming year there are a number of recommendations outlined in the report which the service will take forward.

7.5 Families First Partnership Reforms will bring some changes to this area, developing Child Protection Safeguarding Leads, West Berkshire are in consultation stages around how this will be developed and embedded.

8 Appendix

8.1 Child Protection Annual Report 2024-2025

Background Papers: Annual Child Protection Report 2024-25

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐ No: ☐

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval ☐

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council ☐

Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position ☐

Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months ☐

Item is Urgent Key Decision ☐

Report is to note only ☐

Wards affected: All

Officer details:

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West Berkshire QAAS Annual Child Protection Report 2024-25



West Berkshire
COUNCIL

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1. Executive Summary:

At 208 the number of Children and Young People subject to Child Protection Plans open to the Child Protection Chairs (CPC) as of March 2025 has remained relatively stable over this period in comparison to the number of Children and Young People subject to a Child Protection Plan in March 2024 (210). Although still higher, the number of children per 10,000 subject to a CP plan is more aligned with the South-East and England rates.

Domestic abuse remains the predominant identified factor of concern within the conferences, but the most notable rise has been in the number of children and young people and parents identified as having mental health difficulties over this period in comparison to the previous period.

The average length of time children remain on a CP plan has risen this year to one year. In response we have re-established the CP surgery led by the Service Manager for QAAS and the Service Manager for Family Safeguarding to review all CP plans which have been in place in excess of a year. The aim of these reviews is to quickly identify where drift or delay made to occurring and to ensure that CP plans are being driven through in a time way for children.

The percentage of children in WBC who returned to a CP plan within 2 years of the previous period of CP ending is 21% as of 31st March 2025. The England average is 13%. An audit was undertaken as a test of assurance. No escalations were required for concerns relating to safeguarding/the safety of the children from the audits. All practice was felt to currently be appropriate to identified need.

The most predominant category of harm used in West Berkshire is Emotional Harm and is largely due to the high number of children on CP plans in West Berkshire because of domestic abuse occurring in the home.

75% of ICPCs and 84% of RCPCs were held within the statutory timeframe over this period, this is a drop on the previous year and due to a number of factors, which are listed in full on page 15 of this report. The quality of the SW reports for conference is largely good and they are generally shared in a time way with families. There is a need however to ensure that they are always shared face to face.

There were 940 CP Chair's Report audits completed over this period and of these 73% (75%) found the standard of practice across the Child Protection Conferences by all agencies met good. Where it was identified practice did not meet good, where necessary these issues were addressed by the Chair with the relevant professional/agency. The breadth of the Issues Resolutions raised over this period demonstrate the depth of monitoring the Chairs undertake within the cases they hold. Often the CP Chair has been the consistent professional involved within a child's family and this has been a key factor in keeping children sighted and plans on track over this period.

Participation and engagement by parents and professionals within the conference is good and some examples of feedback received from them in relation to their experience of the conferences is provided within the body of the report. The vast

majority of feedback received is positive, however where an issue is raised this is always addressed to the CP Chair's best ability. QAAS has also developed a set of practice standards for CP conferences over this period to ensure consistency of experience for families involved within this process.

There is very good promotion and take up of advocacy for children subject to CP plans and a small proportion of parents have also been supported by adult advocates where appropriate.

2. Recommended actions from the Quality Assurance & Safeguarding Service 2023-24 West Berkshire Annual Child Protection Report:

Recommendation:	Who:	Outcome:
Consider the viability of EMRAC being used to monitor and run plans around children and young people identified as at risk of child exploitation when the risk is solely outside the home.	Chair of EMRAC	This was explored but was not felt to be logistically viable, however the Chair of EMRAC is exploring alternative options and this remains a work in progress.
Complete an audit of repeat CP Plans to look for any learning and seek to understand if they were avoidable and whether there is any aspect of the conferencing process which could be strengthened.	QAAS Service Manager with Children Services Management Team	Learning is referenced within this report and has been shared via the Performance & QA Meeting.
QAAS to set aside time with the Participation Officer to review how feedback is obtained from children and young people, particularly those who have attended their CP conferences and the number of children providing feedback might be improved.	The QAAS Service and the Children's Participation Officer	<p>This was scheduled to take place earlier in 2025 however a series of Children Services peer Inspections and an Ofsted Focused Visit delayed the commencement of this and it will be carried forward and completed over the 2025-26 reporting period.</p> <p>Over April 2025 RVue has developed a consultation document for Adolescents, which has gone live and is currently working with the Participation Officer and QAAS to</p>

		develop documentation for children and young people within different age ranges and with special needs.
There would be benefit in holding reflective case discussions with the social workers currently working with families within child protection who have been identified as having learning difficulties as a test of assurance in relation to the quality of practice in this area within WBC.	Principal social worker within the staff forums	It was agreed this would occur as part of the discussions with SWs within the monthly full case file auditing process.

3. Acronyms used within this report:

ADCS	Association of Directors of Children Services
CAAS	Contact Advice & Assessment Service
CCA	Case Conference Advisors
C&FS	Children & Family Services
Chair	Child Protection Chair
CIN	Child in Need
CIC	Children in Care
CP	Child Protection
CPC	Child Protection Conference
CWD	Children With Disabilities Team
FSE	Family Safeguarding East Team
FSW	Family Safeguarding West Team
IR	Issues Resolution
LA	Local Authority
NYAS	National Youth Advocacy Service
OLA	Other Local Authority
QAAS	Quality Assurance & Safeguarding Service
SESLIP	South-East Sector Led Improvement Programme
WBC	West Berkshire Council

4. The role of the Child Protection Conferences and the Child Protection Conference Chair:

(Please note that the previous period's data is in brackets within this report for comparison purposes)

- 4.1. A Child Protection Conference (CPC) is a meeting between family members, the child (where appropriate), and professionals involved with the family, about a child's future safety, health and development. It is designed to look at all the relevant information and circumstances to determine how best to safeguard the child and promote their welfare.
- 4.2. West Berkshire Child Protection Conference Chairs are highly experienced, independent managers, accountable to the Director of Children's Services. They have no operational or line management responsibility for the children.
- 4.3. If a decision is made that a child requires a protection plan to safeguard their welfare, the Chair ensures that:
 - The risks to the child are stated and what needs to change is specified.
 - A qualified social worker is identified as a Lead social worker to develop, co-ordinate and implement the Child Protection Plan.
 - A core group is identified with family members and professionals.
 - A date is set for the first core group meeting within ten working days of the Initial Conference and timescales set for subsequent meetings.
 - A date for the Child Protection Review Conference has been set.
 - The outline Child Protection Plan is formulated and clearly understood by all concerned, including the parents and, where appropriate, the child.
- 4.4. If the conference determines that a child does not need the specific assistance of a protection plan but does need help to promote their welfare, the Chair must ensure that:
 - The conference draws up a child in need plan or makes appropriate recommendations for a plan.
 - The conference considers any local protocols in place referred to as 'step down procedures' or Family Group Conference processes.

5. Audits:

- 5.1. Outside of the conferences, a key area of work undertaken by the Child Protection Chairs relates to quality assurance through use of auditing. The Chairs conduct an audit of the child's case file at the point of every child protection meeting and child in care review. These audits can be a powerful driver in improving the quality of front-line practice and the management of services for children and their families. Audits play a crucial role in ensuring the focus remains upon the child and outcomes for children and young people improve.

- 5.2. Auditing enables us to bring to life the experiences of children, young people and their families, and assess the difference our practice is making. They are an integral part of West Berkshire's QA programme.
- 5.3. There were 940 CP Chair's Report audits completed over this period and of these 73% (75%) found the standard of practice across the Child Protection Conferences by all agencies met good. Where it was identified practice did not meet good, where necessary these issues were addressed by the Chair with the relevant professional/agency.
- 5.4. QAAS undertakes targeted auditing where required and has completed the following audits over this period:
- Themed Dip Audit of practice standards – Chronologies – December 2024. The learning from this audit led to amendments within the process and practice guidance. The impact of this audit has been more consistency of the format and presence use of chronologies within children's case files evidenced through subsequent full case file audits.
 - Repeat CP Plans Audit – January 2025 – this audit was undertaken following a rise in the number of children sitting within this category in West Berkshire. With the exception of two families the children audited had been subject to the first period of CP planning for approximately a year and there was a further period of 11 months to 2 years before they returned to a CP plan. Where auditors formed the view the repeat period of CP planning might have been avoided this was for the following reasons:
 - Limited engagement with domestic abuse supports by the abusive parent.
 - Parental learning difficulties and an inability to adapt parenting styles as the child grew, which led to safeguarding concerns.
 - The links between the abusive parent's alcohol misuse as a trigger to the neglect and domestic abuse issues not being sufficiently explored and addressed in the first period of CP planning.

Whilst this learning may be useful this was a very small cohort of the families overall (3).

The challenge in successfully engaging with parents who present with domestically abusive behaviours was that this could not be compelled and within the case files reviewed there was insufficient threshold to escalate to care proceedings.

Another frequently recurring theme where there was identified domestic abuse was with the mother forming a new relationship at a later period with someone who also presented with domestically abusive behaviour. The mother had engaged with supports provided to build safety into their relationship choices prior to WBC involvement ending, but this had unfortunately not prevented them from forming a relationship with another perpetrator of domestic abuse.

There was unanimous agreement to end the previous period of CP planning by all the professionals working with the family and the average length of time they remained open under CIN prior to closure was 5 months. Procedurally the requirement is for a period of at least 3 months.

No escalations were required for concerns relating to safeguarding/the safety of the children from the audits. All practice was felt to currently be appropriate to identified need.

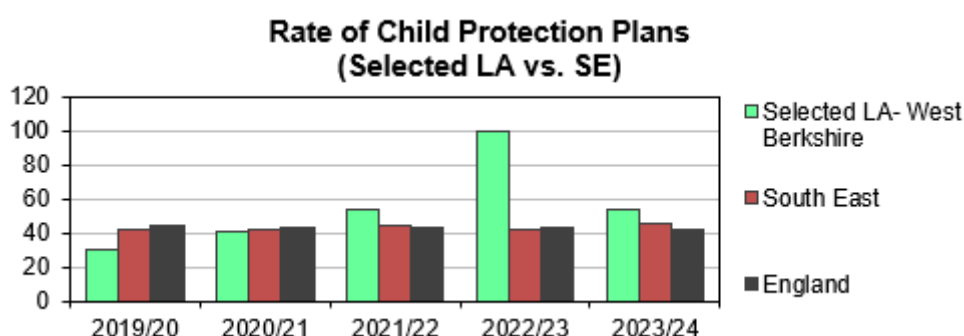
- 5.5 QAAS has also developed a set of practice standards for CP conferences over this period to ensure consistency of experience for families involved within this process.

6. Number of children subject to a CP Plan:

- 6.1. The number of Children and Young People subject to Child Protection Plans open to the Child Protection Chairs (CPC) as of March 2025 has remained relatively stable over this period in comparison to the number of Children and Young People subject to a Child Protection Plan in March 2024.

CP Numbers	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021	March 2022	March 2023	March 2024	March 2025
Number of Children subject to CP plans (excluding temporary plans)	117	129	143	187	342	210	208

7. Rate of ICPCs:



(Freely Available Data Benchmarking Reports – SESLIP)

- 7.1. WBC's rate per 10,000 has stayed at 58, which remains higher than the England (41.6 as of 31/3/24) and South-East sector (45 as of 31/3/25) averages, but as

can be seen from the chart above the rate is more in line with them than it has been in the previous two reporting periods.

- 7.2. In WBC there are three main pathways to ICPC. The majority come through the Contact, Advice and Assessment Service following assessment of new referrals, while a significant proportion over this period has again also come via the two Safeguarding Teams.

Team → Number held ↓	CAAS	CWD	FS East	FS West	Transfer in from other LAs
	73 (69)	2 (3)	27 (31)	20 (22)	4 (4)
As a % overall (rounded to nearest .5%)	56 (53.5)	1.5 (2.5)	21.5 (24)	16 (17)	3 (3)

- 7.3. Just under 4% of the families brought to ICPC over this period remained Child in Need, with a further 8% of families having a mixture of CP and CIN plans as an outcome. This indicates children are individually assessed on need and professionals and the Child Protection Chairs are applying threshold and not automatically assuming it is met for all.

8. Factors of concern identified within the child protection conferences:

- 8.1. Domestic abuse, parental substance misuse and parental mental health issues have always been prevalent factors identified within WBC families (and nationally) where the children in the family are subject to child protection plans. Appendix 1 contains the full breakdown of the identified factors within conferences between 2019 and 2025. The table below contains a comparison of the key factors over the past 4 periods.

Table: Key Identified Factors identified within CP Conferences each period between 2019 (pre-covid) and 2025 as a percentage:

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Child Mental Health	16.5%	13.5%	19%	19.5%	26.9%
Child School Attendance	19.5%	19.5%	30%	31.7%	29.8%
Parental Mental Health	47.5%	53.5%	54%	48.8%	58.1%
Parental Financial Hardship	8.5%	8%	17%	17.7%	21.4%

Parental Domestic Abuse	61.5%	54.5%	63%	63%	58.5%
Parental Drug Misuse	26%	24.5%	25.5%	31.5%	33.5%
Parental Alcohol Misuse	25%	22%	27%	27.4%	27.3%

The most notable rise has been in the number of children and young people and parents identified as having mental health difficulties over this period in comparison to the previous period, which appears to be in line with the overall England numbers.

Poor parental mental health is reported to have overtaken domestic violence as the most commonly reported factor in social worker assessments into whether a child is at risk of serious harm or neglect since 2021, according to new research undertaken by the ADCS ([ADCS Safeguarding Pressures Phase9 FINAL.pdf](#) – P17).

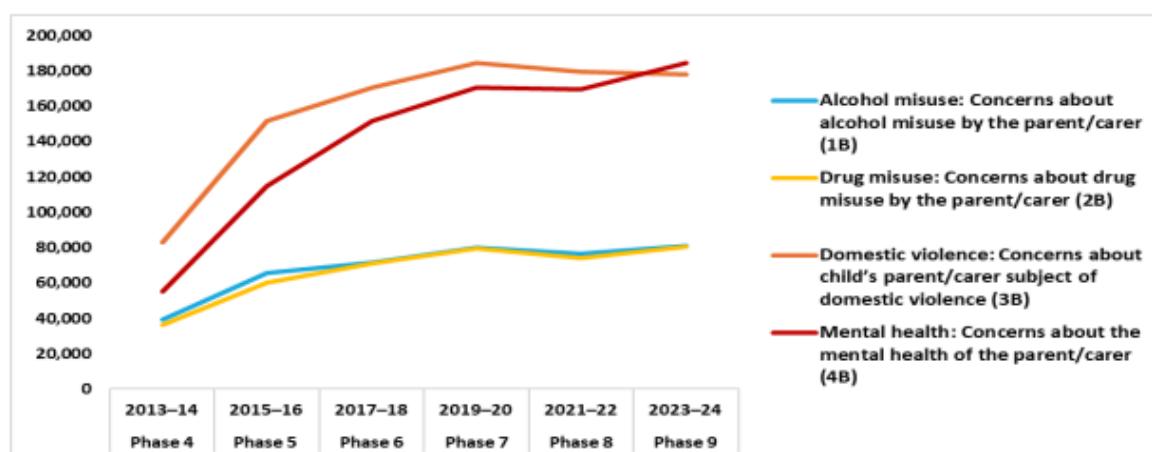


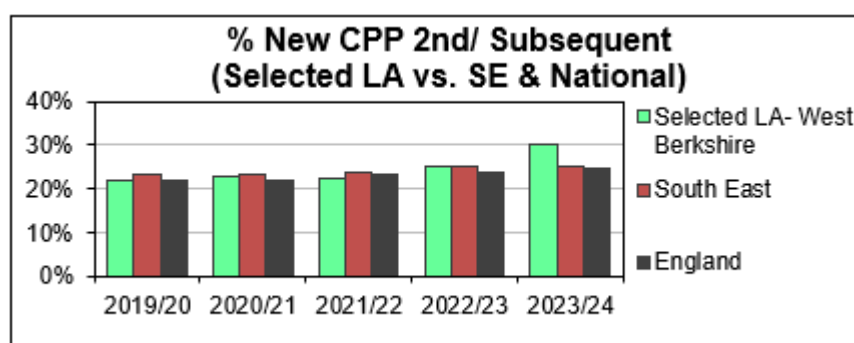
Figure 2: Children's social care assessment factors for parents/carers.

- 8.2. **School Attendance as an Identified Factor of concern within WBC child protection conferences:**
- 8.3. There has been a decrease of 1.9% in the number of children subject to CP plans in WBC where school attendance was an identified issue in comparison to the previous reporting period.
- 8.4. During 2022/23 the National overall absence rate published by the DfE was 10.7%, over 2023/24 this reduced to 8.1% and as of May 2025 this figure is sitting at 6.7%. WBC's rates align with the DfE findings.

9. Child Protection Conference Outcome data:

Number:	No. of children as of March 2024:
Category:	
The number of children subject to a child protection plan for 9 months or more (snapshot at end of month)	90
Repeat plans - Children and young people subject of a CP Plan for a second or subsequent time within 2 years	21%
Number of children remaining CIN from the Initial Child Protection Conference	28 (15 families)
Number of children made subject of a Child Protection Plan at ICPC over this period	228 (119 families)
Number of children who stepped down from a CP plan following RCPC	179 (90 families)
Number of children who moved from CP to CIC at RCPC	33 (20 families)
Number of children who stepped down from a CP plan at first review	14 (12 families)
Average length of child protection plans (no. of days - snapshot at the end of month)	379.37 (12 months)

- 9.1. This period has seen a continued increase in the number of children subject to a CP plan in excess of 9 months.
- 9.2. The CP surgery, which was set up to review all children meeting this criterion, who are not subject to care proceedings and the scrutiny of the Court, has not taken place over this period due to resourcing issues. It is however now back in place and has identified there was some drift occurring. This was subsequently addressed. The surgery had previously been effective in ensuring no drift was occurring and in understanding the factors leading to CP plans being in place over 9 months. With this now back in place we anticipate this figure will reduce.



[Freely Available Data Benchmarking Reports – SESLIP](#)

- 9.3. As can be seen within the above table, the number of children subject to a repeat child protection plan ever in WBC (in green) was higher than the southeast average over the 2023/24 reporting period (in red).
- 9.4. The percentage of children in WBC who returned to a CP plan within 2 years of the previous period of CP ending is 21% as of 31st March 2025. The England average is 13%.
- 9.5. An audit was undertaken as a test of assurance. The aim of the audit was to better understand:
- what factors had led to the original period of CP planning,
 - what factors had led to their current period of CP planning and
 - whether or not the second period of CP planning could reasonably have been avoided.
- 9.6 A high proportion of these families had domestic abuse as an identified factor and over half had one or more of the trio of vulnerabilities as identified risk factors. They all returned to CP plans for similar reasons, but the auditors were of the view that with 80% of these families this had not been avoidable. The most common factor leading to the second period of CP planning was the non-abusive parent forming a new relationship sometime later with someone who was also presenting with domestically abusive behaviours. The auditors were of the view that this could not have been foreseen given work completed with the parent during the initial period of CP planning. With the exception of two families the children audited had been subject to the first period of CP planning for approximately a year and there was a further period of 11 months to 2 years before they returned to a CP plan.
- 9.7 Where auditors formed the view the repeat period of CP planning might have been avoided this was for the following reasons:
- Limited engagement with domestic abuse supports by the abusive parent.
 - Parental learning difficulties and an inability to adapt parenting styles as the child grew, which led to safeguarding concerns.
 - The links between the abusive parent's alcohol misuse as a trigger to the neglect and domestic abuse issues not being sufficiently explored and addressed in the first period of CP planning.

Whilst this learning may be useful this was a very small cohort of the families overall (3).

- 9.8 The challenge in successfully engaging with parents who present with domestically abusive behaviours were that this could not be compelled and within the case files reviewed there was insufficient threshold to escalate to care proceedings.
- 9.9 Another frequently recurring theme where there was identified domestic abuse was with the mother forming a new relationship at a later period with someone who also presented with domestically abusive behaviour. The mother had engaged with supports provided to build safety into their relationship choices prior to WBC involvement ending, but this had unfortunately not prevented them from forming a relationship with another perpetrator of domestic abuse.
- 9.10 There was unanimous agreement to end the previous period of CP planning by all the professionals working with the family and the average length of time they remained open under CIN prior to closure was 5 months. Procedurally in WBC the requirement is for a period of at least 3 months within CIN.
- 9.11 No escalations were required for concerns relating to safeguarding/the safety of the children from the audits. All practice was felt to currently be appropriate to identified need.

Points for reflection as a result of the learning from this audit were:

- When working with parents where domestic abuse is a factor this should include awareness raising of how this may contribute to children staying out of the family home; to be always forward thinking within our assessments and plans around children – how might this situation impact upon each child in the future?
 - Where domestic abuse is a factor alongside other factors of concern analysis should include how these may correlate/counteract.
- 9.12 The learning from this audit was shared within the Children Services Performance & QA Meeting to inform practice.

10. Comparator of the duration of child protection plans against the National figures:

10.1. Percentage of children ceasing CP plans nationally 2022:



Extract of fig 64, p.82: [ADCS Safeguarding Pressures Phase 8 Full Report FINAL.pdf](#)

10.2. Percentage of children ceasing CP plans in West Berkshire over this period:

CP	8 (16)	10 (13)	40.5 (38.5)	35 (28)	10 (4.5)
	> 3 months	3 – 6 months	6mths – 1 year	1 – 2 years	Over 2 years

10.3. Whilst the number of children subject to a CP plan in excess of a year has increased in WBC, the percentages of children within each of these time periods remains relatively aligned with the most recent data within the ADCS Phase 8 Safeguarding Pressure Report's findings.

10.4. The outcome of RCPCs held over this period was:

- 294 (474) children remained subject to a CP plan
- 185 (303) children stepped down to child in need
- 34 (13) children became children in care

(Numbers are higher than the number of RCPCs held as some children within the family network had a different outcome to their sibling).

11. Categories:

11.1. Latest national figures:

As a snapshot, on 31 March 2024 the breakdown of reasons for children being made subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP) in England was as follows:

- 51% (49) neglect
- 37% (37) emotional abuse
- 7% (7) physical abuse
- 3.5% (4) sexual abuse
- 2% (2) multiple

(Source: [Children in need, Reporting year 2024 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#))

- 11.2. The table below provides a breakdown of the number and percentage of children sitting under each category within West Berkshire. The predominant category used within West Berkshire is emotional harm, this has been subject to previous audit where it was established the descriptions given in relation to domestic abuse within each category of harm led to this being used in preference to the category of neglect and often it is accompanied by a secondary category of risk of physical harm.

	CP Plan reason by age group	Total no. of children per category	No. as a percentage
31st March 2025 (snapshot)	Neglect	67 (52)	32% (27)
	Emotional Abuse	114 (107)	55% (56)
	Physical Abuse	17 (26)	8% (4)
	Sexual Abuse	10 (7)	5% (4)

11.3. Secondary (dual) Categories:

The use of dual categories was introduced in West Berkshire towards the end of 2018 to provide ability to ensure that this was not being overlooked and to test the hypotheses that where risk of sexual and physical harm was present, it might not have been the primary concern. 285 (176) children have been made subject to a CP plan under dual categories over this period. Having dual categories provides greater understanding of how risk is being applied and acts as assurance that, whilst physical and sexual harm may not be the predominant concern within the family, risk continues to be monitored and is not being overlooked.

No. of Children	Main Category:	Secondary Category:
2 (2)	Sexual Abuse	Emotional harm
1 (1)	Sexual Abuse	Neglect
57 (46)	Emotional Harm	Physical Abuse
9 (6)	Emotional Harm	Neglect
7 (5)	Emotional Harm	Sexual Abuse
14 (1)	Neglect	Emotional Harm
6 (1)	Neglect	Physical Harm
1 (0)	Neglect	Sexual Harm
18 (25)	Physical Harm	Emotional Harm

12. Timeliness of Conferences:

- 12.1. There was a total of 404 (531) child protection conferences held during this period, (data is per family and not per child), this equates to 8.5 (11) conferences being held per week.

12.2. Within this number a total of 129 (150) conferences needed to be rescheduled, which impacted at times upon capacity to maintain the timeliness of them over this period:

*Please note the total number of identified issues within this table may be higher than the number of instances conferences were late due to the delay being as a result of multiple factors:		
	ICPC	Review CPC
Timeliness of the meeting	75% (85%)	84% (92%)
No of conferences held	129 (95)	275 (394)
Number of conferences rescheduled:	34 (27)	97 (123)
Number held outside the statutory timeframe	32 (26)	44 (53)
Reason for the delay in holding the conference (Some conferences had multiple reasons and so the overall figure in this section may be higher than the numbers above)	9 (6) – no CPC capacity (all held within 3 days of due date)	25 (49) – late social work report
	6 (8) – late social work report	25 (21) – Parental Availability - illness/in labour/did not arrive/child ill/in court/new job
	6 (2) – Parents unable to attend	13 (14) CP Chair availability – illness/capacity
	3 (0) CP Chair ill – all held within 5 days of due date)	10 (23) – social worker availability – Court/Annual Leave/illness/capacity
	2 (0) threshold not initially established	9 (13) moved to ensure key professionals were present
	1 (0) invitation list not received from SW in time	5 (0) Brought forward due to change – risk reduced/SO in place
	1 (1) School holidays, moved to ensure they were present	5 – delayed for legal advice or update from Court
		2 (0) no interpreter arranged
		1 (0) delayed to maintain same chair in sibling group

- 12.3. Where appropriate Issues resolutions have been raised by the Child Protection Chairs to address the factors which led to the conferences being delayed and this is explored in more detail later in this report.
- 12.4. The factors listed within the above table reflect the challenges being experienced, not just within the social work teams, but within QAAS and other agencies in relation to capacity and the recruitment and retention of staff.
- 12.5. When a conference is rescheduled this involves a repeat of the processes used to set it up, effectively doubling the work of the business support administrators within QAAS who manage this side of the work.

13. Timeliness of Visits to Children by the SW Teams and sharing of reports for conference:

- 13.1 An average of 87% (93) of SW reports for ICPCs and 88% (84) of SW reports for review CP conferences were shared within procedural timeframes prior to the CP conference over this period. Timeliness of reports for ICPCs over this period has reduced in comparison to last year, but the timeliness of reports for RCPCs is showing an improving picture.
- 13.2 On average 80% (78) of children on CP plans were visited within the last 10 days over this period. This is again showing an improving picture in comparison to the previous period. As previously mentioned in this report some of the drop is a recording issue because of workload demands and staffing changes. Where they haven't occurred on time, this has been challenged by the CP Chair.
- 13.3 The absence of recordings however would impact upon overall assessments and understanding of the progress of work being completed and the service manager for Family Safeguarding has been continuing to work with her team managers to track visiting and to ensure visits are always recorded.
- 13.4 The quality of the social worker's reports is generally of a good standard, the following is a breakdown of the grades given by the CP Chairs:
- Outstanding 10
 - Good 647
 - Requires Improvement 79
 - Inadequate 6

14. Demographics:

Gender	As of 31 st March 2025 (snapshot)	As a percentage:
Female	86 (89)	41.5% (46)
Male	115 (98)	55% (51)
Unknown	7 (5)	3.5% (3%)

- 14.1. A slightly higher proportion of male children are brought to conference in comparison to females. Where it has been recorded that the gender was unknown, this relates to unborn babies on child protection plans.

14.2. **Comparator of gender against the identified factors within all the conferences held between 1/4/23 and 31/3/24:**

(Percentages are worked out as a percentage against the factors identified within every conference held, then per gender)

FACTOR:	Parental Domestic Abuse	Parental Drug Misuse	Parental Alcohol Misuse	Parental Mental Ill Health	Parental Disability	Parental Learning Difficulty	Financial Hardship	Housing Issues
GENDER								
Female	61% (49)	34% (50)	28% (60)	56% (50)	6% (75)	5% (33)	20% (52)	32% (50)
Male	57% (51)	34% (50)	27% (40)	60% (50)	6% (25)	10% (67)	23% (48)	28% (50)
Percentage rate of factor within conferences overall	58% (61)	30% (30)	27% (25)	58% (45)	6% (3)	8% (4)	21% (13)	30% (23)

FACTOR:	Young Person School Attendance	Young Person Mental Health	Young Person Behaviour at Home School	Young Person Offending or Anti Social Behaviour	Young Person with Disability	Young Person with Learning Difficulty	Young Person vulnerable to or experiencing sexual exploitation
GENDER:							
Female	33% (53)	31% (54)	28% (50)	7% (57)	3% (31)	3% (29)	6% (53)
Male	27% (47)	23% (46)	27% (50)	5% (43)	5% (69)	4% (71)	5% (47)
Percentage rate of factor within conferences overall	30% (29)	27% (18)	27% (23)	6% (8)	4% (5)	3% (4)	6% (8)

- 14.3. The parents of 25% of the children and young people with an identified factor of mental health difficulties also had identified mental health difficulties.

14.4. The percentage of each of the identified factors was relatively evenly split across the genders, although whilst a small cohort boys had a higher incidence of parental learning disability in comparison to the girls.

14.5. The trio of vulnerabilities remain the most predominant identified factors within child protection conferences.

14.6. Ages of children on CP plans:

Nationally:

The ages of children receiving social care support has changed over the years. The age profile of children becoming subjects of child protection plans has continued to shift towards older children. 4.4% of children starting a plan were aged 16 and 17 years compared to 3.9% two years ago. 5.4% of children subject of a child protection plan as at 31st March 2022 were aged 16 years and over compared to 4.7% two years ago.

[ADCS Safeguarding Pressures Phase 8 Full Report FINAL.pdf](#)

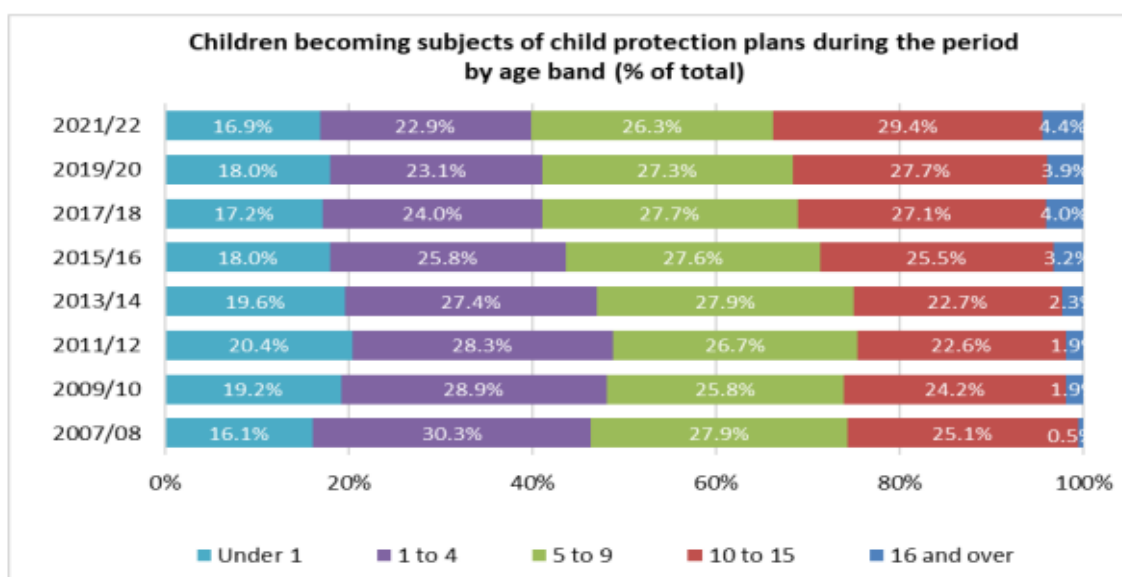


Figure 60: Children becoming subjects of child protection plans during the period by age banding - % of the total
(Source: SGP respondents)

[ADCS Safeguarding Pressures Phase 8 Full Report FINAL.pdf](#)

West Berkshire age breakdown: (Snapshot 31/03/24):

Under 1	1 – 4 years	5 to 9 years	10 to 15 years	16+
12.5% (9.5%)	20% (22.5%)	28% (32%)	33% (31%)	6% (5%)

The ages of children on CP plans in West Berkshire is generally in line with the ADCS 2021/22 National figures. However West Berkshire has had a smaller percentage of

children under the age of 1 year and over 16 years of age subject to a CP plan over this period in comparison to the National figures.

CP Plan Reason by age group	Under 1	1 to 4	5 to 9	10 to 15	16 and over
Sexual Abuse	0	3	3	3	1
Neglect	16	10	19	19	3
Emotional Abuse	8	23	32	44	9
Physical Abuse	2	6	4	3	0
Total	26	42	58	69	13

Neglect is the predominant factor of concern for children under the age of 1yrs whereas in all other age ranges the concerns relate predominantly to emotional harm.

14.7. Ethnicity:

Ethnicity in West Berkshire

According to the latest 2021 census, the population in West Berkshire is predominantly white (91.9%), with non-white minorities representing the remaining 8.1% of the population.

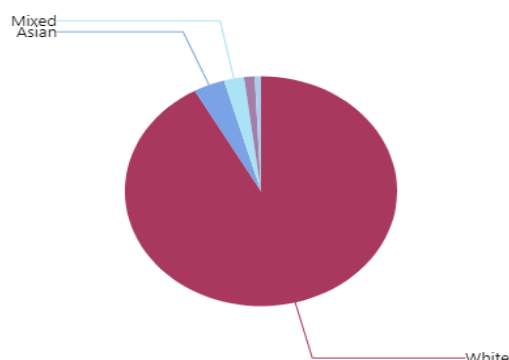
Asian people were the largest minority group in West Berkshire accounting for 3.7% of the population.

2,030 or 1% of the West Berkshire population are black according to the latest 2021 census.

In England more broadly the portion of the population that is white is 81%. 10% are Asian and 4% are Black.

Population by race in West Berkshire, 2021 census

- **White** - 148,384 people or 91.9%
- **Asian** - 5,990 people or 3.7%
- **Mixed** - 3,857 people or 2.4%
- **Black** - 2,030 people or 1.3%
- **Other** - 1,186 people or 0.7%



[West Berkshire Demographics | Age, Ethnicity, Religion, Wellbeing \(varbes.com\)](https://varbes.com/West-Berkshire-Demographics-Age-Ethnicity-Religion-Wellbeing)

14.8. Snapshot: 87% (80) of children and young people subject to a child protection plan as of 31st March 2025 were of White British origin. The percentage of children and young people subject to a child protection plan from minority ethnic

groups was 13% (20). This is a higher rate than the percentage of children from an ethnic minority background overall within West Berkshire although the school census puts the number of school age children from BAME backgrounds at 12%, which is more aligned.

15. Participation:

15.1. Participation & multi agency work with children and families within Child Protection Conferences:

15.2 The Berkshire Child Protection procedures require all professionals invited to attend child protection conferences to do so, and if they are unable to do so they are required to send a suitably briefed representative in their place. Attendance by professionals has generally though been good.

15.3 All professionals invited to conferences are required to provide a report, which has been shared with the family and the CP Chair at least 2 working days (for ICPCs) or 5 working days (for RCPCs) prior to the date of the conference being held. Whilst reports are generally sent into the Chair in time, they can be late arriving with the family and there has been occasions where they have not been shared at all, when this happens it delays the start of the meeting because the family need time to go through the report. The quality of the reports is generally good.

15.4 There are only a small number of incidences when a professional has not attended or provided a report for conference. When the CP Chairs identify practice issues they will pick this up with the relevant agency to ensure it is addressed and some occasions where this has occurred is explored later in this report. School Nursing and the GPs tend to only come to ICPCs unless they have an ongoing role and so the data below is focused solely upon these meetings.

Agency:	School	Early Years	School Nurse (ICPC only)	Health Visitor	Midwife	GP (ICPC only)
Did not attend	50 7%	39 17%	49 22%	79 16%	29 31%	191 83%
Did not attend or provide a report	33	22	15	29	24	58
Report late to Chair	7	8	19	0	1	4
Report late to family	29	32	113	76	22	65
Quality of the report provided:						
Outstanding	0	0	0	12	0	0

Good	167	187	215	417	70	144
Requires Improvement	4	4	3	0	0	18
Inadequate	0	0	0	0	0	0

15.5 There was a lack of clarity within the Pan Berkshire CP Procedures during the last reporting period as to whose role it is to share professional's reports for conference. Practice guidance is now clear that it is the author of the report who has this responsibility.

15.6 Generally the quality of professional's reports for conference are good and they are provided to the Chair in a timely manner.

Police attendance within conferences:

15.7 The Police representatives are always invited to attend ICPCs, but do not generally attend review child protection conferences. This is generally because only those professionals with an active role, or where they might contribute, are included within the reviews and the Police often do not have an ongoing role. Where they do attend this is usually because there is an ongoing investigation and the officer in the case is invited to attend.

15.8 Currently the WBC ICS reports do not capture Police attendance data, but it is anticipated that this will be rectified when WBC move to a different ICS system. In the meantime, QAAS has been manually recording this information post the conferences:

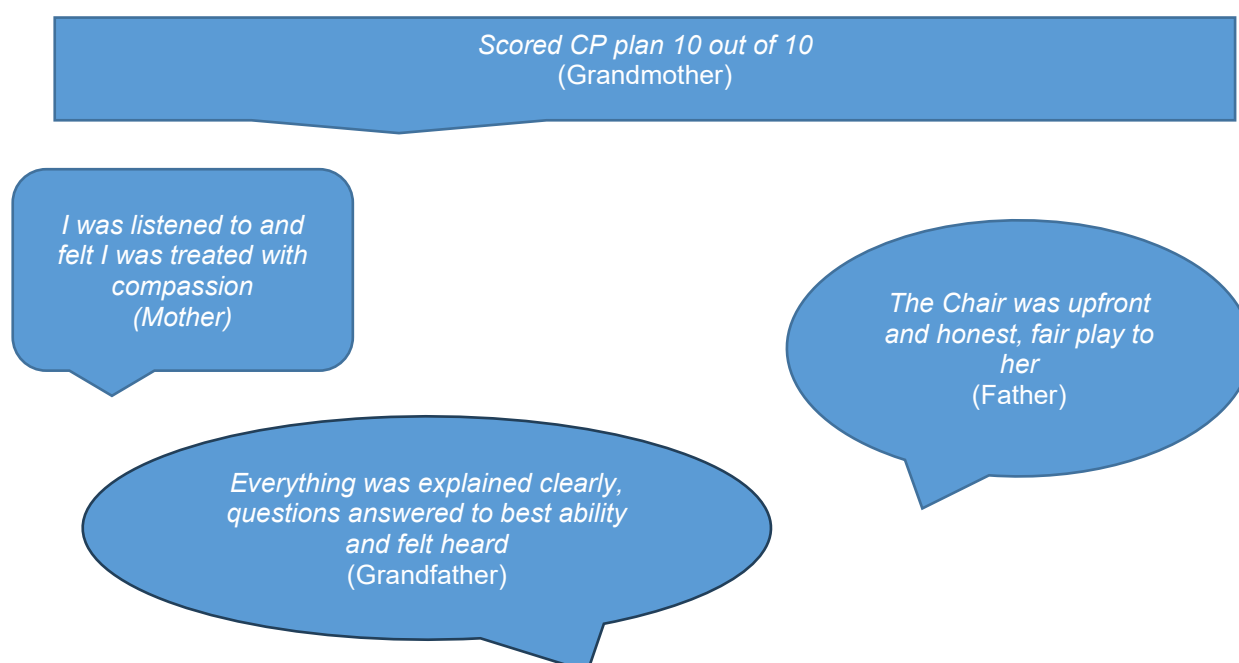
Meeting type:	ICPC	RCPC
Number of Meetings held where Police were invited to attend	129	Not known
Number of meetings held where the Police attended	112	17 (34)
No of meetings where Police were invited to but did not attend	17 13% (23)	Not known

15.9 The Police are again currently reporting significant capacity difficulties at present, their Case Conference Advisors (CCA) are centrally based and cover the entire Thames Valley area (Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire).

15.10 Despite this their level of attendance at ICPCs has improved over this period. Police would not usually attend RCPCs unless they have a defined role and they are recorded as having attended 17 RCPCs over this period.

16. Parental participation within conferences:

- 16.1 The child(ren)'s mother has been present within 92% (89) of conferences held, with fathers having been present within 66% (68). The lower attendance rate with fathers may be due to working hours (conferences are held during working hours). The parent's partner attended 4% (7) of the conferences held.
- 16.2 Extended family members were recorded as having attended within 24% (28) of the conferences held. Levels of feedback from family members are relatively low. The focus of practice development for QAAS over the next period is participation and we intend to review how feedback is received and reported upon with the aim of improving this over the next period. The following is a sample of some of the feedback received from families:



Adult advocacy:

- 16.3 Adult advocacy was provided for parents within 125 conferences over this period.

17. Child Participation and Consultation within CP Conferences:

- 17.1 The voice of the child is central in the information sharing and decision-making process. Whilst some children/young people feel able to share their views independently, those who do not feel able to do this are offered advocacy to ensure they feel listened to and that their views are accurately recorded and shared.
- 17.2 Where appropriate, children and young people involved within conferences are supported to attend and contribute. 94 (78) children and young people were recorded as having attended their child protection conferences over this period,

which is a further increase in comparison to the following period which had also seen an increase from 57 to 78.

The children thought you were a very nice professional, they said they felt included and supported.

(Children via their SW)

18. Child Advocacy:

18.1. The rights of each child to be provided with advocacy support in respect of making a complaint is set out within:

- The Children Act 1989 (s24D and s26).
- Adoption and Children Act 2002.
- The Advocacy Services and Representations Procedure (Children) (Amendment) Regulations 2004. Guidance: Providing Effective Advocacy Services for Children and Young People making a complaint under the Children Act 1989.

“Domestic legislation in England does not grant children and young people a universal entitlement to independent advocacy when they need it. The default assumption is that most children live within protective familial structures and that, if the need arises, families should be able to advocate on children’s behalf…… (However, it should be provided for)… children and young people in receipt of social care services (including child protection) who wish to make a representation.”

(Children’s Commissioner 2024)

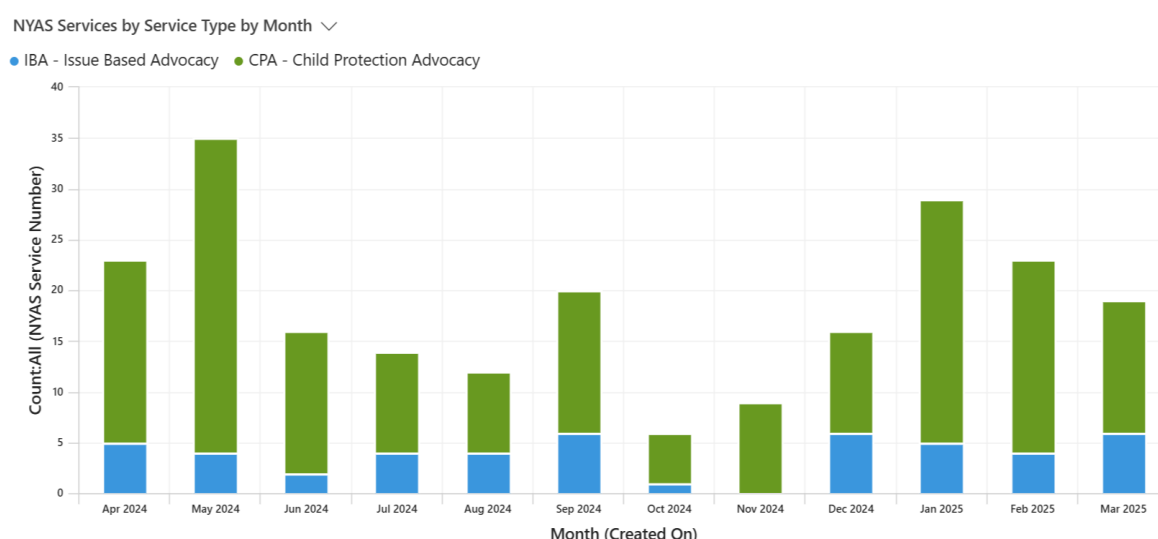
18.2. Formal advocacy for children and young people in WBC is provided via the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS). It is the provision of this service the data in the following table relates to. Providing a child with an advocate gives them the opportunity to speak to somebody with no connection to them, or the CP process, and to provide feedback and have a voice in decisions and plans being made about them.

18.3. The CP Chair’s report captures why NYAS advocates were not used within the conferences for children and young people. From 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025 there were a total of 445 (404) occasions when children did not have an advocate for their conference and the reasons recorded by CP Chairs for this are set out below:

(numbers are higher than number of conferences as this is per child and not family as is the case within most aspects of this report)

No Advocate Offered to Child Reason	
No referral made	157
One was not available	30
Other	44
Refused by child	22
Refused by parent/carer	24
Too young	140
Unable to identify interpreter	2
Unborn	26
Total	445

- 18.4. The number of children who were recorded by the CP Chairs as not having been referred for advocacy over this period has increased. There has been increased demand for advocacy over this period and so many children were supported to have a voice via other means, such as discussion with the CP Chair or via a family support worker, school pastoral support or via a named person of trust identified by the child themselves. The prevalence of this has not been captured. However, the Child Protection Chairs raise an issue resolution where a child/young person has not had advocacy support provided when it has been requested and this is kept under review within conferences.
- 18.5. The advocacy provision has also now been increased to ensure there is wider availability for it.



- 18.6. As can be seen from the above table, the largest area of take up for advocacy support is within the child protection conference arena.
- 18.7. The following is a sample of the feedback the advocacy provider, NYAS, has received in relation to their work with our children and young people:

When you read out the report, I can hear the YP, it sounds just like them.

The voice of the children has really helped me to come to the decision I have to step down to CIN.
(Professional)

that was a lovely report"
"For a young man that is so closed to talking you managed to get so much from him"
(Professional)

YP thanked me for my work with him and expressed that he feels he can trust me and confide in me
(advocate from child)

at first I wasn't sure what was going on and I was confused, now I am really happy and it was nice to be able to talk to you.
(child)

It was lovely that she opened up so much to you -
thank you
(professional)

19. Feedback about the conferences:

- 19.1. QAAS welcomes feedback from all sources and this is received from a variety of avenues. For CP conferences at present the predominant form of receiving feedback is through feedback documents completed by attendees at the end of each conference. 313 (194) people provided feedback using these documents over this period. The following is a representative example of feedback received over this period from professionals in attendance:

Very clear, well thought through and done in collaboration with the parent
(Clinical Psychologist, CAMHS)

Balanced conference focusing on the needs of the children
(Health Visitor)



- 19.2. Feedback has been predominantly positive in relation to how child protection conferences are being managed.
- 19.3. However, all feedback is reviewed by the relevant CP Chair post conference and read by the QAAS Service Manager. Where necessary the CP Chair will undertake follow up calls to discuss the feedback provided and where relevant this is fed back across QAAS as part of ongoing learning and development within the Service. There have been a small number of issues raised within the feedback received with the following actions taken:

Feedback received:	Action taken:
The meeting started 25 minutes late, but it was not clear why there was this delay, whilst waiting on TEAMS for the meeting to start. (CAMHS)	This was unfortunate. The parents had not seen all the reports provided prior to the day of the meeting, they elected to go ahead with the meeting, but it was important they were given adequate time to read and digest the reports before the meeting commenced.

<p>Parents did not feel heard and felt unable to put their point of view across. They feel most of the concerns are educational needs and not down to their parenting and that unrealistic goals have been set for the children.</p>	<p>The parents were provided with an adult advocate to assist them in having a voice in the conferences and this was sent in after the meeting. They do not agree that a CP plan is required. Every effort is being made to ensure their views are included and considered as part of the ongoing planning.</p> <p>The parent's view is sought and discussed within the pre-meeting with them with the support of the adult advocate and the chair is ensuring their views are included within the conferences.</p>
<p>I don't like teams, professionals should attend in person, very poor representation from (X) agency (Team Manager)</p>	<p>TEAMS is only used where unavoidable and required to achieve attendance from a particular professional. External challenge was raised by the CP chair to this agency and the issue was addressed. Fortunately, all agencies invited to conferences are aware of the importance of attending and participating face to face and generally this is achieved.</p>
<p>Would be good to have been involved at the initial conference - any others that may be needed to be invited (teacher for the hearing impaired)</p>	<p>The teacher was unhappy not to have been invited to the ICPC initially by the allocated SW. However, the school and pre-school for both children were there and they were in the process of transitioning to new schools - this was subsequently rectified and they are now a part of the core group and conferences. Their input was really helpful and reinforced what the schools had been saying.</p>
<p>Father was allowed to be hostile to professionals within the conference (midwife)</p>	<p>The father was annoyed to be accused of being domestically abusive and stated this in the meeting, this was not directed at anyone in particular. The chair had noticed the children's father was covertly recording the meeting, the chair spoke to the father about his behaviour which had caused upset for some of the professionals present who were unhappy he had been covertly recording them and refused permission</p>

	for him to do this. He apologised to all present for his behaviour.
Police non-attendance was an issue since mum denied the information in their reports completely (social worker)	It was unfortunate the Police were not there, this was subsequently picked up with them by the Chair after the meeting and highlights the importance of professionals attending conferences to speak to their reports.
I was not able to give a view about the plan stepping down as the child became emotionally heightened and I left the room with them. It would have been better to prepare X more for the purpose of the meeting and for his views to be captured in a more structured way. (Youth Justice social worker)	This as an RCPC/CIC meeting and assumptions were made by the Chair about preparations having been made ahead of the meeting. The chair agreed with the view of this professional. There should have been better preparation. The meeting was ended and re-scheduled to take place on a different date. The learning from this was discussed with the child's allocated social worker and team manager. The IRO asked for an advocate for the child to be organised and visited to speak to the child prior to the day of the re-arranged meeting.

- 19.4. The QAAS service manager has continued to undertake staff practice observations and whilst less have been achieved over this period due to capacity issues, the quality of practice observed in relation to the CP Chairs has remained consistent.
- 19.5. When meetings have online attendees the CP Chairs will check if they believe an online participant may not be giving the meeting their full attendance and address the situation particularly if there are people potentially within earshot of the meeting. The use of laptops within meetings is also being tightly managed, with laptop use only being permitted for participants to access their reports for reference when they are presenting their information.

20. Issues Resolutions (IR) raised by the CP Chair over this period:

A total of 85 (69) quality assurance issues were raised in relation to children and young people who were subject to CP Plans, this is an increase of 23% (40) in comparison to the previous period. QAAS endeavours to raise IRs and to resolve them at the informal level or at stage 1. When they are raised higher this is usually due to the response not being received within the set timescale or because there was a need for that level of seniority to have oversight and to redress the issues the CP Chair has raised.

When an IR is raised there is a 5 working day timescale for the manager in

receipt of the IR to respond before it is escalated to the next stage. The purpose of this is to avoid delay in the issues raised being resolved.

Stage raised:	Number raised	Number of these which were escalated and stage they were escalated to.
Informal (line manager for SW)	34 (27)	All were resolved at this stage.
Stage 1 (Team Manager)	44 (35)	3 progressed to stage 2.
Stage 2 (Service Manager)	10 (6)	7 IRs were raised directly as stage 2. All bar 1 were resolved at this stage. One escalated to stage 3 due to no response from the social work manager within the prescribed timescale.
Stage 3 (Service Director)	1 (1)	No IRs were raised at this level over this period. 1 was escalated from stage 2 as described above.
Stage 4 (Executive Director)	0 (0)	No IRs were raised at this level over this period.

A full breakdown of the reason why IRs were raised is attached in appendix 2 of this report. The Children & Family Service hold monthly performance meetings, chaired by the Service Director. The purpose of this meeting is to monitor the quality and timeliness of practice and to put steps into place to address identified concerns. There is evidence of the effectiveness of this board in that the frequency of IRs being repeatedly raised has reduced, particularly in relation to missing visits and core groups, which has significantly dropped.

The frequency of families receiving reports for conference late has also seen a reduction in occurrence. There has been a small number of IRs raised over this period in relation to how reports are being shared with parents. Whilst not specifically stated within the CP procedures, good practice would dictate that the allocated social worker visits the family to go through their report with them prior to the conference. This would provide the family with an opportunity to request factual inaccuracies where necessary and to challenge some of the content and avoid this playing out within the conferences. The CP Chairs are reporting anecdotally that reports are often being shared electronically, the IRs raised relate to parents who have advised they were unable to read the reports as a result of this practice.

All the IRs were resolved and action taken to address the identified issues. It should be noted that many of the IRs raised in relation to visiting and core groups was explained to be a recording issue, which was rectified. Without a record of the visits, the CP Chairs are compelled to consider these in the same way as a missed visit because they cannot contribute to the ongoing work and assessment being undertaken with children and their families.

The breadth of the IRs raised over this period demonstrate the depth of monitoring the Chairs undertake within the cases they hold. Often the CP Chair has been the consistent professional involved within a child's family and this has been a key factor in keeping children sighted and plans on track over this period.

19 Feedback from the Child Protection Chairs:

The CP chairs always try to ensure that good practice is recognised and that this is fed back to the relevant professional. Often this takes place verbally, immediately after the conferences, but the following are some examples of particularly good practice, which the Chair wanted line managers of the professionals involved to know:

The social worker was very clear in her presentation in the meeting and child focussed; positive interactions with the family and explaining the worries and rationale for decision making in a respectful, empathetic and family friendly way. In my view, her excellent practice has contributed to the success and good outcome for (child) and the family and has made their experience of working with the department positive be. (CP Chair to SW)

The school and mum mentioned your name as part of the support and how positive your work is with (child). It was a positive conversation and I thought demonstrated really good joined up work with the school, family and yourself.
(CP Chair to EWO)

I was impressed with your support to mum, which enabled her to participate in the meeting not only in terms of helping her to keep calm and focussed on the issues at hand, but also sharing information on her behalf based on your work and knowledge of the family.

(CP Chair to SW)

The positive relationship you have managed to establish with the parents, has supported mum to make the most of the support offered to her, which she was able to recognise; this is a big point as she was also able to reflect, she had not been able to so do in the past. Your work has enabled them to engage in open and challenging discussions in the conference, more so they were able to acknowledge what could be seen as shortcomings/negatives.

(CP Chair to SW)

I just wanted noted as I walked mother out to the main office following the review she commented on how helpful (SW) had been and how supported she had felt by her. She said she was dreading the child protection process, but for her on reflection it had been a positive process.

(CP Chair to SW)

20 Recommended Actions:

Action	Who:	When by:
QAAS to continue to work with the Participation Officer to develop updated consultation documentation and review how feedback is obtained from children and young people, particularly those who have attended their CP conferences and the number of children providing feedback might be improved.	The QAAS Service and the Children's Participation Officer	31 st October 2025
Audit of children subject to CP plans to explore involvement of the child's father within the process	CS Management Team as part of the dip audit programme	30 th September 2025
Family Safeguarding to review how oversight is maintained on the progression of plans when there are changes of SW to avoid drift/delay.	Sonia Harris, Service Manager, FS	30 th August 2025
Social Care Reforms around Lead Safeguarding Practitioners Role will be developed this year	QAAS Service Manager	March 2026

Appendix 1: Factors identified within Child Protection Conferences between 2019 and 2023:

2019/20:

Parental Domestic Abuse	Parental Drug Misuse	Parental Alcohol Misuse	Parental Mental ill Health	Parental Disability	Parental Learning Difficulty	Financial Hardship	Housing Issues	Young Person School Attendance	Young Person Mental Health	Young Person Behaviour at Home School	Young Person Offending or Anti Social Behaviour	Young Person with Disability	Young Person with Learning Difficulty	Young Person vulnerable to or experiencing sexual exploitation	Other
318	110	108	253	9	35	68	140	132	120	110	43	28	16	34	110
55.4%	19.2%	18.8%	44.1%	1.6%	6.1%	11.8%	24.4%	23.0%	20.9%	19.2%	7.5%	4.9%	2.8%	5.9%	19.2%

2020/21:

Parental Domestic Abuse	Parental Drug Misuse	Parental Alcohol Misuse	Parental Mental ill Health	Parental Disability	Parental Learning Difficulty	Financial Hardship	Housing Issues	Young Person School Attendance	Young Person Mental Health	Young Person Behaviour at Home School	Young Person Offending or Anti Social Behaviour	Young Person with Disability	Young Person with Learning Difficulty	Young Person vulnerable to or experiencing sexual exploitation	Other
384	161	156	295	5	37	52	91	120	102	109	43	20	17	25	100
61.3%	25.7%	24.9%	47.1%	0.8%	5.9%	8.3%	14.5%	19.2%	16.3%	17.4%	6.9%	3.2%	2.7%	4.0%	16.0%

2021/22:

Parental Domestic Abuse	Parental Drug Misuse	Parental Alcohol Misuse	Parental Mental ill Health	Parental Disability	Parental Learning Difficulty	Financial Hardship	Housing Issues	Young Person School Attendance	Young Person Mental Health	Young Person Behaviour at Home School	Young Person Offending or Anti Social Behaviour	Young Person with Disability	Young Person with Learning Difficulty	Young Person vulnerable to or experiencing sexual exploitation	Other
379	170	153	373	19	26	55	132	134	92	133	62	34	18	38	140
54.4%	24.4%	22.0%	53.5%	2.7%	3.7%	7.9%	18.9%	19.2%	13.2%	19.1%	8.9%	4.9%	2.6%	5.5%	20.1%

2022/23:

Parental Domestic Abuse	Parental Drug Misuse	Parental Alcohol Misuse	Parental Mental ill Health	Parental Disability	Parental Learning Difficulty	Financial Hardship	Housing Issues	Young Person School Attendance	Young Person Mental Health	Young Person Behaviour at Home School	Young Person Offending or Anti Social Behaviour	Young Person with Disability	Young Person with Learning Difficulty	Young Person vulnerable to or experiencing sexual exploitation	Other
479	195	206	411	15	31	129	205	228	144	200	68	42	32	58	179
62.6%	25.5%	26.9%	53.7%	2.0%	4.1%	16.9%	26.8%	29.8%	18.8%	26.1%	8.9%	5.5%	4.2%	7.6%	23.4%

2023/24:

Parental Domestic Abuse	Parental Drug Misuse	Parental Alcohol Misuse	Parental Mental ill Health	Parental Disability	Parental Learning Difficulty	Financial Hardship	Housing Issues	Young Person School Attendance	Young Person Mental Health	Young Person Behaviour at Home School	Young Person Offending or Anti Social Behaviour	Young Person with Disability	Young Person with Learning Difficulty	Young Person vulnerable to or experiencing sexual exploitation	Other
517	258	225	397	32	45	145	211	260	160	184	75	45	39	67	158
63.0%	31.5%	27.4%	48.4%	3.9%	5.5%	17.7%	25.7%	31.7%	19.5%	22.4%	9.1%	5.5%	4.8%	8.2%	19.3%

2024/25:

Parental Domestic Abuse	Parental Drug Misuse	Parental Alcohol Misuse	Parental Mental ill Health	Parental Disability	Parental Learning Difficulty	Financial Hardship	Housing Issues	Young Person School Attendance	Young Person Mental Health	Young Person Behaviour at Home School	Young Person Offending or Anti Social Behaviour	Young Person with Disability	Young Person with Learning Difficulty	Young Person vulnerable to or experiencing sexual exploitation	Other
453	258	212	449	43	61	163	228	227	205	210	49	32	26	43	233
58.4%	33.2%	27.3%	57.9%	5.5%	7.9%	21.0%	29.4%	29.3%	26.4%	27.1%	6.3%	4.1%	3.4%	5.5%	30.0%

Appendix 2:**Reason why an Issues Resolutions was raised:**

(numbers below are higher than the overall number of IRs raised because the IRs have been raised for a multiple of issues)

Stage raised:	Informal	Stage 1:	Stage 2:
Issue raised:	Frequency of occurrence:	Frequency of occurrence:	Frequency of occurrence:
Visits out of timescales/missing from file recordings	10 (37)	12 (1)	2 (0) (1 escalated to stage 2 due to no response being received)
Delay in pre-birth assessment			2 (0)
Core groups out of timescales/missing from file recordings	5 (40)	11 (0)	1 (0)
No advocacy in place	0 (3)	4 (0)	
No chronology/chronology significantly out of date	9 (15)	9 (0)	
Father not assessed	0	(0) 1	1 – escalated from stage 1 due to no response being received
Poor quality SW report/missing key information	2 (3)	2 (0)	1 (0)
Concerns report for conference, whilst good quality had been written by unqualified worker	0	1 (1)	1 – Chair not satisfied with the response received & escalated to stage 2
Late report/not shared with parents	10 (18) – includes 3 (5) instances where father not living at home wasn't	12 (0)	1 (0)

	sent the report		
Key professionals not invited		3 (0)	
No interpreter arranged		1 (0)	
CP Chair not notified of significant event		1 (0)	
Key information/event not in report and delay in acting		4 (0)	
No allocated SW	0 (8)		
Delay in actions within the CP plan being progressed	2 (4)	4	1 (0)
Parents & professionals not aware of key info before conference		1 (0)	
Changes of SW impacting upon progress			3 (0)
Delay in seeking legal advice/action/move to PLO	4 (4)	2 (1)	3 (0) (1 escalated from stage 2 due to no response being received)
Lack of evidence of management oversight	1 (4)	2 (0)	
CIN process post CP procedure not followed	0 (3)		
Challenging the legal status of the child's living arrangements	1 (2)	1 (1)	1 – Chair not satisfied with the response received & escalated to stage 2
SW report e-mailed and parents couldn't access it	4 (0)		
Lack of challenge of partners who are not attending core groups	1 (0)		
Case file recordings on transfer of child to OLA missing	1 (0)		
No receiving SW at ICPC	1 (0)		
Questioning why work on DA hadn't been commenced by SW whilst waiting for DA worker availability	1 (0)		
CP plan not updated for RCPC	1 (0)	4 (0)	

Invitation list for conference late which delayed conference	1 (0)		
IRs raised against partner agencies:			
Non-attendance in CP conference and/or no report provided – VIA, New Barn School, Probation, Nursery, GP & CAMHS – specific professionals	7 (2)	0 (1) CAMHS 4 CMHT 1 Housing 2 SEN 1 School 1 Police	1 escalation from stage 1 due to no response being received - CAMHS
Late sharing of reports with families – professional challenge made in conference to numerous agencies by the CP Chair	4 conferences		

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SEND & Inclusion Strategy Delivery Plan & Summary Report

Committee considering report:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Date of Committee:	11 th September 2025
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Heather Codling
Date Head of Service agreed report: (for Corporate Board)	29 th August 2025
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	3 rd September 2025
Report Author:	Hannah Geddert; SEND Strategy Officer
Forward Plan Ref:	

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report provides the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee with an update on the ongoing implementation of the SEND & Inclusion Strategy. It includes the current multi-agency delivery plan, developed and owned by partners across the local area partnership, and this accompanying summary report. The delivery of the SEND & Inclusion Strategy is overseen by the multi-agency SEND Strategic Improvement Board.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee note the updates provided within the SEND & Inclusion Strategy Delivery Plan and this summary report, and consider providing further oversight, challenge, and support in relation to areas identified as requiring particular attention.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	There are no direct financial implications for this report. However, it should be noted that some actions within the delivery plan have required business cases/applications for alternative funding streams, given Delivering Better Value (DBV) funding has now concluded. In addition, some actions will continue to be considered and progressed in line with the Council's budget setting processes to ensure alignment with available resources.

Human Resource:	There are no significant HR implications arising directly from this report however, delivery of some actions, particularly within Priority 6 – Preparation for Adulthood, require HR involvement particularly in relation to our ambitions to offer a broader menu of work-related learning opportunities and to become an employer offering Supported Internship placements. This input will need to be carefully managed in light of existing HR capacity.			
Legal:	N/A			
Risk Management:	N/A			
Property:	N/A			
Policy:	<p><u>Local Policy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Berkshire SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2024-29 • West Berkshire Council Strategy 2023-27 <p><u>National Policy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Equality Act 2010 • The Children & Families Act 2014 • The SEND Code of Practice 2015 			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				

A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?	X			<p>The send & Inclusion Strategy Delivery Plan is expected to have a positive impact on equality. Its focus is on improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND, many of whom may experience disadvantage and barriers to participation in education, employment and community life. By driving forward actions that strengthen inclusion, improve access to services, and widen opportunities for independence and achievement, the plan, alongside the overall strategy, seeks to reduce inequalities.</p> <p>This report does not present a decision for consideration; it is provided for information only. Any specific actions within the plan continue to be assessed for equality impacts as they are developed and implemented.</p>
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	X			<p>The delivery plan is likely to have a positive impact on service users with protected characteristics, particularly children and young people with disabilities and their families. The actions aim to increase access to appropriate education support transitions into adulthood, and improve participation in community and employment opportunities. These measures will help address existing disparities and contribute to improved life chances.</p>
Environmental Impact:				N/A
Health Impact:	X			<p>The SEND & Inclusion Strategy Delivery Plan is expected to have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of children and young people with SEND. Many actions in the plan aim to improve access to appropriate support, reduce barriers to participation, and promote social and physical wellbeing. The delivery of the plan is supported through close collaboration with health partners, ensuring that interventions are coordinated and aligned with wider health and care priorities.</p>

ICT Impact:				N/A
Digital Services Impact:				N/A
Council Strategy Priorities:	X			<p><u>Priority 1: Services we are proud of</u> The SEND & Inclusion Strategy Delivery Plan supports the development and delivery of high-quality, responsive services for children and young people with SEND, ensuring that families have confidence in the support available.</p> <p><u>Priority 2: A fairer West Berkshire with opportunities for all</u> By improving access to education, work-related learning, and transition support, the SEND & Inclusion Strategy Delivery Plan promotes equality of opportunity and helps reduce disadvantage for children and young people with SEND, contributing to a fairer and more inclusive West Berkshire.</p>
Core Business:				N/A
Data Impact:				N/A
Consultation and Engagement:	<p>The SEND & Inclusion Strategy delivery plan for 2025-2026 was developed through a co-production approach. Each priority area held meetings with members of its respective priority group to finalise the plan, reviewing the actions that had been completed, determining which actions should carry forward into the current year's plan, and agreeing any new actions required to achieve the strategic priorities.</p> <p>Each priority group includes a wide range of stakeholders from across the local area partnership, including representatives from the Parent/Carer Forum (PCF), SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice & Support Service), health services and local schools, ensuring that the plan reflects the views and expertise of all relevant partners.</p> <p>The plan also incorporates learning from recent external reviews, including the OFSTED SEND Thematic Review and the audit conducted by the Early Years DfE Advisor.</p>			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 The SEND & Inclusion Strategy Delivery Plan sets out a comprehensive programme of actions aligned to six strategic priorities and a series of enabling factors, all aimed at improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND. It is a multi-agency delivery plan, with actions owned by partners from across the local area partnership. The plan is overseen by the multi-agency SEND Strategic Improvement Board and incorporates outstanding actions from the Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme.
- 4.2 A governance structure is in place and has recently been strengthened through the introduction of a Priority Lead meeting. Previously, each priority group was chaired by the SEND Strategy Officer. However, it was agreed that chairing of these meetings would be more effective if managed by senior colleagues from relevant service areas, bringing greater subject expertise and strategic oversight.
- 4.3 The newly established Priority Lead meeting will report directly to the SEND Strategic Improvement Board. The meeting cycle and reporting frequency have also been reviewed, with meetings now scheduled to take place six times per year. This allows sufficient time for progress between meetings while maintaining regular oversight.
- 4.4 To manage capacity effectively, while the delivery plan will be monitored at each meeting, lead action owners will be required to provide full updates on their actions on a termly basis using a prescribed format.
- 4.5 Completion of actions within the delivery plan is monitored via a RAG rating system. The RAG rating is as follows:

Not Started	Overdue/Unresolved Issue	Partial Completion	Started – On Track	Completed

- 4.6 A Gantt chart has also been devised to provide a clear visual overview of the delivery plan's actions, timelines, to support more effective monitoring and progress tracking. This will be introduced to the Priority Lead meeting as the meeting becomes more embedded within the governance structure.
- 4.7 To date, completion of actions in the 2025-2026 delivery plan is as follows:

	Priority 1 – Early Years	Priority 2 – Early Intervention	Priority 3 – Inclusion	Priority 4 – Developing Local Specialist Provision & Support	Priority 5 – Alternative Provision	Priority 6 – Preparation for Adulthood	Enablers	Total
Not Started	1	3	1	4	9	3	0	21
Overdue/Unresolved Issue	1	0	3	1	0	2	5	12
Partial Completion	2	1	7	3	1	3	3	20
Started – On Track	7	8	14	14	0	11	5	59
Completed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	11	12	25	22	10	19	13	112

- 4.8 Significant progress has been made across all six priorities including, increased childcare places, mental health support in schools, expanded specialist provision, and steps towards better preparation for adulthood.
- 4.9 A number of actions currently RAG rated as 'not started' or 'overdue/unresolved issue' are linked to areas where delivery responsibility sits with partners or are impacted by limited capacity and resourcing within the system. Key challenges remain, particularly around capacity for Annual Reviews, lack of a SEND Youth Forum and formal youth voice mechanism, delays associated with commissioning capacity, and concerns over system's ability to accurately record data to support strategic decision-making.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.1 This report provides an update on delivery of the actions within the SEND & Inclusion Strategy Delivery Plan 2025-2026. Over half of the identified actions (53%) have been RAG rated as started and on track.
- 5.2 The delivery of actions within the SEND & Inclusion Strategy Delivery Plan is monitored through the established governance framework, including the respective priority groups and the newly introduced Priority Lead meeting. This meeting will report into the SEND Strategic Improvement Board to provide enhanced oversight and strategic alignment.
- 5.3 To support effective progress tracking, the frequency of meetings and reporting has been reviewed. Meetings will now be held six times per year, allowing sufficient time for work to advance between sessions. Lead action owners are required to provide comprehensive updates on their actions on a termly basis, ensuring accountability while managing capacity across the system.
- 5.4 This report outlines key progress highlights and identifies areas of concern in the delivery of the SEND & Inclusion Strategy.

Background

- 5.5 This section introduces a summary of progress highlights and areas of concern in the delivery of the SEND & Inclusion Strategy delivery plan 2025-2026. It is intended to support scrutiny and oversight by providing a clear overview of what is working well and where further attention is required.
- 5.6 Progress highlights are as follows:

5.6.1 Priority 1: Early Years

- Over 120 new childcare places have been created, and five schools are preparing to open nurseries.
- 9 Parent Champion Volunteers are trained and actively supporting the community. Further recruitment is underway with a targeted focus on those who have experience of accessing Early Help and Family Hubs.
- 86.6% uptake of 2-year health visitor checks in 2024-2025; exceeding the 85% target.

- A best practice guidance document has been implemented for transitions, with footprint visits planned to monitor understanding and implementation.
- ECAT training uptake has increased from 5 to 33 settings.

5.6.2 Priority 2: Early Intervention

- Phase 1 of the Whole School Mental Health Project showed improved attendance and reduced suspensions in participating schools. Phase 2 has been redesigned and funding allocated for delivery.
- A structured plan is in place for all SEN Managers, EHC Coordinators, and SEN Officers to complete the Council for Disabled Children (CDC) online training. This training will be embedded into the induction process for new staff and once fully established within the SEND Team, will be extended to a wider group of professionals.
- The Neurodevelopmental transformation work is progressing and being monitored under the Berkshire Neurodivergence Transformation Board.

5.6.3 Priority 3: Inclusion

- Review of banding is being co-produced with schools; testing is in progress.
- Dyslexia Friendly Award will be launched in September 2025.
- Relational Inclusion Policy has been implemented as part of Phase 1 of the Whole School Mental Health Project. Phase 1 schools have offered to 'buddy' with Phase 2 schools.
- An Interim Annual Review Officer has been appointed with an initial focus on Year 6 and Year 11 transitions.

5.6.4 Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (P4) & Support and Strengthening Alternative Provision (P5)

- The expansion of The Castle School by four additional classrooms (to accommodate 32 additional pupils) is on track for practical completion by December 2025, with pupils expected to start in January 2026.
- Data analysis is informing decisions around sufficiency, with updates shared regularly with the Executive.
- Visits to Short Breaks providers are underway, in co-production with the West Berkshire Parent/Carer Forum. The data from this exercise will inform the competitive tender process for Short Break provision when the Commissioning Team are in post.
- An SLA is being developed with iCollege to ensure our Alternative Provision remains appropriate.

5.6.5 Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood

- Corporate Board has endorsed the idea of the Council becoming an employer offering Supported Internship placements. This is due to be shared with SLT, with one or two placements anticipated to begin in September 2026. This will go some way to the Council becoming a Level 3 Disability Confident Employer.

- A Berkshire wide SEND Employment Forum is in the early stages of development which will bring together Local Authorities, education providers and employers to improve outcomes for young people with SEND across Berkshire

5.6.6 Enablers

- The digitisation of EHCPs has been explored with a preferred option identified and a business case in development. This will streamline the process for families, schools and professionals.
- A co-production meeting is scheduled for September 2025 to initiate the development of a West Berkshire Quality Assurance Framework. Insights gathered from the Courageous Conversation on EHCP quality, held in May 2025, will inform the creation of key West Berkshire principles that will serve as the foundation for the framework.

5.7 Alongside the achievements, there remain some key challenges and risks which are detailed below:

5.7.1 Capacity Constraints

- Annual Reviews:
 - A lack of capacity has impacted the completion of Annual Reviews, resulting in the Local Authority experiencing challenges in meeting our statutory duties and creating risks around compliance, timely updating of provision, and effective forward planning for children and young people. While one agency worker has been appointed to focus initially on Year 6 and Year 11 transition reviews, capacity remains limited and there is a significant risk that other cohorts will not receive statutory reviews and timely amendments to their EHCPs.
- SEND Youth Forum:
 - Currently, there's no SEND Youth Forum in place, which means young people with SEND don't have a dedicated space to share their views or influence decisions that affect them. Without a clear way to gather youth voice, there's a risk that services and strategies won't fully reflect their real-life experiences or needs—and it becomes harder to show genuine co-production.
 - Several options have been considered. The Participation Team in Children's Social Care isn't able to support SEND-specific work at the moment, although young people who are looked after and have SEND needs will still be heard through existing channels. The SENDIASS contract is due to be retendered, and those involved in that process have been informed, especially since SENDIASS previously ran the youth forum before it was brought in-house.

5.7.2 Commissioning

- Several actions remain on hold/cannot progress further until the commissioning team is fully recruited and the successful candidates have started in post. Areas affected include:
 - Development and oversight of Alternative Provision
 - Short Breaks competitive tender

- Supporting the mobilisation of the newly procured Children and Adult's Supported Employment Service
- Progressing cost-effective solutions to increase local capacity; including in independent provisions.

5.7.3 Data & Systems

- Concerns regarding data accuracy have delayed continued development of the SEND data dashboard. Dedicated data cleansing days have been scheduled to resolve these issues and to ensure reliable reporting.
- Although a strategic review of the CapitaONE/MRI system has been undertaken, concerns remain over its ability to capture the full range of information required by teams in education, leading to an ongoing reliance on spreadsheets which hampers oversight and limits effective monitoring.

5.7.4 Governance & Oversight

- Delays with the SEND data dashboard developments are impacting the work of the Data Scrutiny and Accountability group, limiting timely and accurate information to inform the SEND Strategic Improvement Board's decision-making.
- The Local Offer is currently in development due to limitations in families' access to clear, accurate, and up-to-date information and posing a potential risk in the event of a SEND Inspection. Although co-production activity is planned for October 2025, a Head of SEND is required to provide strategic oversight of these developments and ensure they are effectively addressed.

Proposals

- 5.8 This report is for information only and does not present new proposals for decision. It summarises progress made in delivering the SEND & Inclusion Strategy and highlights areas requiring continued oversight and support. The Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee are invited to note the updates and consider how it can continue to support delivery, particularly in relation to identified challenges such as capacity constraints, commissioning delays, and improvements required to systems and data.

6 Other options considered

- 6.1 As this report is for information and not seeking a decision, no alternative options are proposed. However, the delivery plan has been developed through a co-production approach, with multiple options and actions considered by each priority group. Where challenges have been identified, alternative approaches have been explored. These areas remain under review as part of ongoing strategic oversight.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 The SEND & Inclusion Strategy Delivery Plan continues to drive forward improvements across six strategic priorities and supporting enablers. While significant progress has been made, there are key areas that require continued attention, including Annual Review capacity, youth voice mechanisms, commissioning, systems and data. The

Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the contents of this report and maintain oversight of these areas to ensure continued progress.

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix A – SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2024-2029

8.2 Appendix B – MASTER SEND & Inclusion Strategy Delivery Plan August 2025

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐ No: X

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval ☐

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council ☐

Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position ☐

Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months ☐

Item is Urgent Key Decision ☐

Report is to note only ☐

Wards affected: All

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2			

West Berkshire Council SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2024-2029 Innovation in SEND



Children with SEND receive the right support, adjustments, and interventions, at the right time, to thrive in childhood and to prepare well for adulthood.



WestBerkshire
C O U N C I L

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Foreword

It is our privilege to introduce West Berkshire's SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) and Inclusion Strategy. This document represents a commitment to fostering an inclusive, supportive, and equitable environment for all children and young people in our community. It is grounded in our belief that every child, regardless of their abilities or needs, deserves access to high-quality education and support affording them the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Over the past year, we have engaged in extensive consultations with families, educators, healthcare professionals, and community organisations. Their insights have been invaluable, and we are grateful for the time and passion they have invested in shaping this strategy. It is through these collaborative efforts that we can truly understand and address the diverse needs of our children.

The strategy outlines a clear vision: to create an inclusive landscape where barriers to success are removed, and all children feel valued and supported. It is not just about meeting statutory obligations; it is about embracing a culture of inclusion that permeates every aspect of our support and education system. This means ensuring that our schools are equipped with the resources, training, and support necessary to provide tailored educational experiences. It also means fostering a community where differences are celebrated, and every child's contribution is recognised.

Our approach is underpinned by a set of core principles: collaboration, early intervention, person-centred planning, supporting children close to where they live and maximising independence. By working together across all sectors, we can identify and respond to needs more effectively, ensuring that children receive the right support at the right time. Early intervention is crucial in preventing difficulties from escalating and helping children achieve better long-term outcomes.

This strategy builds on the priorities of West Berkshire in its Council Strategy 2023-27;

- Services we are proud of
- A fairer West Berkshire with opportunities for all
- Tackling climate and ecological emergency
- A prosperous and resilient West Berkshire
- Thriving communities with strong local voice.

We are confident that this strategy accompanied by its delivery plan will serve as a robust framework for enhancing the experiences of children with SEND. It is a living document, designed to evolve as we learn and grow together. We urge all stakeholders to engage with it actively and work in unison to bring our vision to life.

Thank you for your dedication to this vital work.



Cllr. Heather Codling

Portfolio Holder – Children, Education and Young People's Services



AnnMarie Dodds

*Executive Director
(People - Children's Services)*



What the Council and Local Area must do for children and young people with SEND

In West Berkshire, we believe that Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is everyone's business, which means that everyone has a key role to play to ensure that children and young people with SEND, and their families, receive the support they need. Our vision for what we would like SEND Services to look like in West Berkshire is:

Children with SEND receive the right support, adjustments, and interventions, at the right time, to thrive in childhood and to prepare well for adulthood.

The SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2024-2029 outlines the priorities we will be working on over the next five years and has been written in response to the information gathered as part of the Delivering Better Value (DBV) Programme (a programme run by the Department for

Education (DfE) to support Local Authorities, and their partners, to improve the delivery of SEND Services for children and young people whilst working to ensure that funding remains available to deliver these services) and the SEND Review which took place in 2023 (where we completed a review of the provision in West Berkshire, met with parents/carers, schools nurseries and voluntary providers and completed a young person's survey

Why do we need a SEND & Inclusion Strategy?

The Children and Families Act (2014) applied major changes to the way in which Local Authorities and their partners (e.g. education, health and care) help and support children and young people with SEND and their families.

Part 3 of the Children and Families Act (2014) outlines the legal responsibilities of Local Authorities, Education, Health and Care providers in relation to the provision of care and support for children and young people with SEND and their families, it also details the formal processes which must be followed in providing this care and support.

Under the Equality Act (2010), education providers have a legal duty to ensure they do not discriminate against children and young people with SEND; ensuring that all pupils, including those with SEND, are involved in every aspect of school life and that adjustments should be made to the way settings teach pupils to allow for this.

The SEND Code of Practice (2015) is legal guidance which organisations who work with children and young people with SEND and their families must follow. It outlines core principles and provides guidance on how to work within legal frameworks to best support children and young people with SEND.

Having a SEND & Inclusion Strategy is important because it:

- Allows us to clearly see the impact our work is having on children and young people with SEND and their families.
- Clearly shows what our co-produced priorities are which supports with decision making.
- Gives direction within the local area, ensuring stakeholders are working together within the legal frameworks to deliver the identified priorities.
- It provides a focus for leaders.
- It allows us to monitor our progress against what we said we would do.

Governance

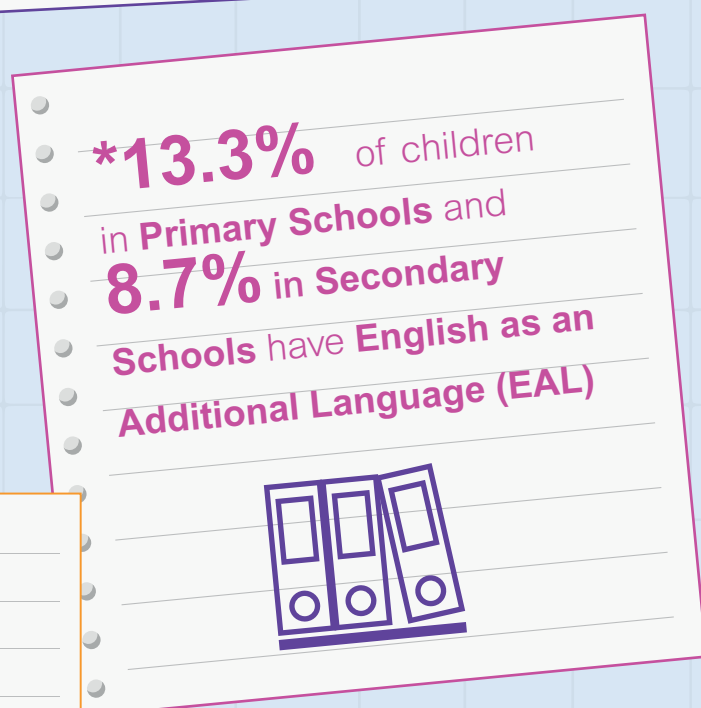
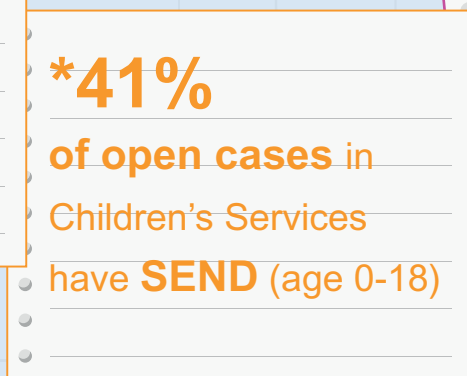
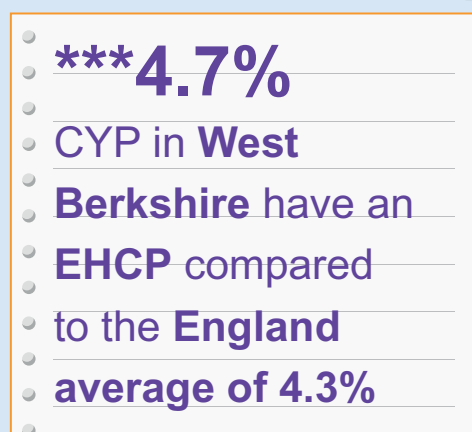
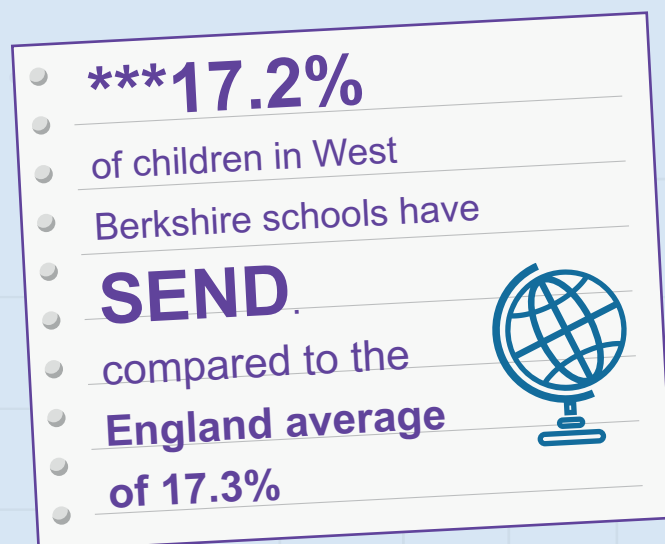
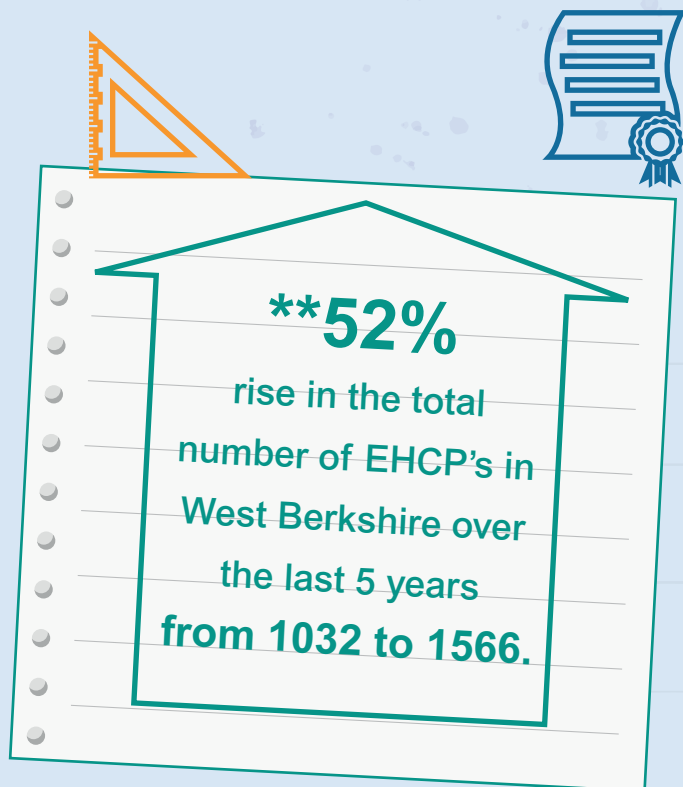
West Berkshire's SEND & Inclusion Strategy will be delivered in partnership by the Council, the Integrated Care Board (ICB), health providers, schools and other voluntary and community services and will be implemented using the principles of co-production.

The Council has overall responsibility for the delivery of the strategy and progress will be monitored by the SEND Operational Partnership Board and SEND Strategic Improvement Board.

Each priority area will have a delivery group created where colleagues from education, health, care and other services will become members, agree projects and project leaders, agree timescales and success criteria so we know we have been successful.

The strategy is supported by a Delivery Plan which outlines in more detail, under each priority, the actions we will take, when we will take them and the improvements we expect to see as a result. This will be updated annually.

Key Facts



**At SEN Support:

- **Specific Learning Difficulties** (SpLD) most identified Primary Need.
- **Autism & SEMH** next most identified Primary Need.

**At EHCP:

- 50% have the Primary Need of **Autism**.
- **SEMH** next most identified Primary Need.
- **Speech, Language & Communication Needs** (SLCN) are increasing.



What you told us: What we have done & what needs to improve

Throughout its development, the SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2024-2029 has been informed by feedback, from across the Local Area Partnership, gathered as part of the DBV programme and as part of the SEND Review which took place in 2023. Feedback was gathered in several ways including:

- Case Review Sessions.
- Listening Forums.
- Coffee Mornings.
- SEND Advice Sessions.
- SEND Youth Survey.

This coproduction with children & young people, families, and key partners, will remain a focus during the delivery of our SEND & Inclusion Strategy. Feedback highlighted that there are things we are doing well, and things we need to improve.

What we have done well:

- New educational settings have been built.
- Specialist teams have been created or expanded including; Early Development & Inclusion (EDIT) Team the Autism Team and the Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) Team.
- A new model of therapeutic practice has been introduced.
- Clear standards of SEND provision in schools have been set.
- Neurodiversity Service created with peer support available whilst awaiting assessment.
- 'Through My Eyes' project has helped develop the skills of staff working with children and young people with SLCN.

What needs to improve:

- Early identification and support of SEND needs.
- Improved transition, including transition to adulthood.
- Additional local provision required to meet need; particularly for SEMH, Autism and acute anxiety.
- More consistent access to employment related activity.
- Additional short break and respite provision, including increasing access to extracurricular activities for those children and young people with EHCPs.
- Continued upskilling of the workforce to ensure confidence in identifying and working with children and young people with SEND needs.
- Increased family confidence in school's abilities to meet SEND needs including in mainstream provision and without the need for an EHCP.
- Ensuring support is available throughout West Berkshire, reducing family's needs to travel to access the support they need.

Schools are struggling to meet the emotional and mental health needs of their learners, while parents are struggling to access the right services at the right time –
Case Review completed as part of DBV programme.

SENCOs and Parents/Carers both said they didn't believe the schools had the right resources to meet SEN Learners' needs –
Listening Forums as part of DBV Programme.

The overwhelming sensory environment and inflexibility of school policies in mainstream secondary schools means many SEN learners are unable to access mainstream learning -
Case Review completed as part of DBV programme.

I think that the key area that would be useful in delivering improved SEND provision in mainstream schools would be additional funding so that sufficient staffing can be in place to meet children's needs. –
SENCo feedback as part of DBV programme.

Individual teaching staff and support staff are very receptive to my child's needs -and seek to be proactive but the need and demand is too great for them to be able to offer the level of support my child needs. –
Parent feedback as part of DBV programme.

SEMH take up so much classroom time. Those children who don't necessarily need EHCPs then end up becoming an EHCP child because they don't have support earlier on...Some children need ASD unit. These children could be supported in mainstream without EHCP if they have somewhere to go and calm down during the day. –
SENCo's describing the challenges and support provided for children and young people with increasingly complex SEMH and Autism needs as part of DBV programme.

My teachers know that I am different from a lot of the other children and are trying to help me learn how to play and communicate better with the other children –
Young Person feedback, via parent/carer/professional as part of SEND Review (2023)

A quiet space helps me to learn and to focus like the HRB [Hearing Resource Base]. I enjoy Sensory Circuits because it helps me warm up for the day ahead of me –
Young Person feedback, via parent/carer/professional as part of SEND Review (2023)

Everything is good at the moment. More career advice in the next few years would be good as well as a variety of work experience. –
Young Person feedback, via parent/carer/professional as part of SEND Review (2023)

Having some clubs or places i can go to meet people and friends like me -
Young adult feedback as part of SEND Review (2023)



Our Approach and Priorities.

The Purpose of the SEND & Inclusion Strategy is to ensure:

Children and young people with SEND receive the right support, adjustments, and interventions, at the right time, to thrive in childhood and to prepare well for adulthood.

Our Approach:

Co-production with
children, young
people & families

Early Help &
Prevention

Maximising
independence for
children and young
people with SEND

Person-centred &
trauma informed
approaches

A joined-up
approach to
meeting children
and young people's
needs

Supporting families
as close as possible
to where they live

Our Priorities & Goals:

The priorities & goals of the SEND & Inclusion Strategy

Priority 1: Early Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the take-up of the Early Years entitlement, particularly for our most vulnerable families. • Support parents, settings, partners, and practitioners to identify emerging needs in children under 5, with systems and processes in place to support this. • Make sure we have the right expertise, in the right place, to meet emerging needs of children under 5. • Ensure our schools and practitioners are well prepared for meeting the needs of our children transitioning from the Early Years to school, with the right systems and processes in place, including effective collaboration between settings/practitioners
Priority 2: Early Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure an appropriately trained and confident workforce, able to promote inclusivity and identify needs early. • Identify, and where possible close, gaps in service delivery for children with emerging needs or at SEN Support. • Increase our mental health support to schools to enable them to better meet the needs of children and young people early. • Work with colleagues across the health system to develop, and implement, a needs-led approach to neurodiversity.
Priority 3: Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the capability of our local schools and settings to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. • Support our local schools to reduce fixed term and permanent exclusions of children and young people with SEND. • Develop systems and processes to support children and young people with SEND moving successfully from primary to secondary education. • Work with school partners to identify opportunities for the provision of specialist outreach support into mainstream settings. • Support our local schools with the early identification of EBSA and a consistent implementation of provision.
Priority 4: Developing local specialist provision & support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the current, and future, needs of children and young people with SEND to ensure their needs can be met locally. • Work with our local mainstream provision to identify opportunities to develop additional SEMH, Autism, MLD and SLD provision. • Work with our local maintained special schools to identify opportunities for expansion and exploring with partners opportunities for additional specialist provision. • Develop bespoke packages of support for children and young people who are not attending school for health or other reasons. • Work with stakeholders to develop an enhanced short break offer to better meet the needs of children & young people with SEND and their families locally

Priority 5: Strengthening Alternative Provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver high quality Alternative Provision locally operating alongside mainstream and special schools to meet the needs of our pupils for some, or all, of their education. • Undertake a needs analysis to ensure that we understand demand and can meet need. • Further develop short- and medium-term Alternative Provision to enable students to re-engage with education and return to mainstream schools. • Develop short- and medium-term emergency alternative provision for children and young people who have no educational setting.
Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve access to high quality information regarding preparation to adulthood for young people with SEND and their families. • Increase opportunities for young people with SEND to secure employment, including the development of Supported Internships and Apprenticeships. • Work with local mainstream and specialist FE providers to improve provision for work-related learning. • Work with Adult Social Care to ensure opportunities for young people with SEND to meaningfully engage and participate in their local community. • Ensure pathways from children's to adults' health services work smoothly and are clearly understood.

Enabling the delivery of our priorities

- To develop a digital strategy which enables us to collect, use & share data more effectively; and to develop a digital dashboard to enable leaders' effective oversight.
- Work with Public Health, and other partners, to improve the SEND content of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) to enable the local area to better meet need in the future.
- To explore opportunities to digitise Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).
- Development of a commissioning and quality assurance resource and function to support the placements of children and young people with SEND.
- To work effectively with our partners to improve governance and oversight of SEND provision.
- Supporting the development and expansion of the newly created West Berkshire Parent/Carer Forum ensuring that leaders are able to respond to the views of children & young people and their families.
- Enhancing the work to support the SEND Youth Forum, ensuring that leaders are able to respond to the views of children and young people.
- To ensure the most efficient use of limited financial resources in the High Needs Block of funding.

Delivery Plan

There is a detailed delivery plan covering the period April 2024 – March 25 supporting this strategy. It will be reviewed and updated annually. A summary of the plan for 24/25 is provided below.

INNOVATION IN SEND

ONE PLAN : DBV Programme & SEND and Inclusion Strategy

	Priority 1: Early Years	Priority 2: Early Intervention	Priority 3: Inclusion	Priority 4: Developing local specialist provision & support	Priority 5: Strengthening Alternative Provision	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood	YEAR
DBV Workstream 1 - Clear communications with families and wider local area partners to support access to services and the SEND system when they need it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Delivery of the communications strategy and parent champion programme to improve engagement, especially of our most vulnerable families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Mapping of existing services to ensure clear pathways for referral and this will be communicated on an updated co-produced Local Offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">From our gap analysis identify any gaps which are barriers to inclusive practice in our mainstream schools, identify mechanisms by which these gaps can be addressed (through commissioning or co-commissioning) to further support our schools and settings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reviewing decision making processes to ensure transparency, consistency, and value for money. Decision making processes to be updated, where necessary, on the Local Offer		<ol style="list-style-type: none">Improve access to high quality information regarding preparation to adulthood for young people with SEND and their families.Increase opportunities for young people with SEND to secure employment, including the development of Supported Internships and Apprenticeships.Work with local mainstream and specialist FE providers to improve provision for work-related learning.Work with Adult Social Care to ensure opportunities for young people with SEND to meaningfully engage and participate in their local community.Ensure pathways from children's to adults' health services work smoothly, and are clearly understood.	2024-5
DBV Workstream 2 - Enabling settings, schools and colleges to meet the diverse needs of their communities locally including complex emotional and mental health needs of CYP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Enhance the Early Development and Inclusion Team (EDIT) to enable the team to take direct referrals from early years settings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Audit of schools' additional SEND training needs and create a plan to meet identified gaps.Ensure existing SEN support teams work in a coordinated way and provide a single point of referral/ access.Explore opportunities to provide outreach support to mainstream schools from our special schools and the Specialist Inclusion Support Service (ISS)Whole School Mental Health Project to be expanded and offered to all mainstream schools in West Berkshire, to be evaluated after one year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Developing and sharing a best practice guide to support schools and settings on the most effective use of funding Element 2 Review to the use of element 2 to promote targeted intervention at SEN support through early identification of need and timely access to appropriate resources.Develop a Transitions Support Programme, to be led by schools and co-produced in clusters, to ensure that children and young people are appropriately supported to successfully transfer into their next mainstream provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Understand better the needs of the current and future cohorts of children with SEND in order to ensure the availability of the type of education provisions required to meet need, the development of a SEND Sufficiency Strategy.Undertake a banding review of unit costs of mainstream, maintained special and alternative provision to ensure parity and alignment with local and national funding arrangements.Reviewing and updating of Strategic and Operational commissioning and procurement practices, in relation to placements and Alternative Provision - including brokerage and contract management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Go out to the market to develop a range of alternative provision available in West Berkshire to meet individualised needs of our children and young people.Establish commissioning and quality assurance processes in relation to alternative provision		2024-5
SEND INCLUSION STRATEGY 2024-2029 Priorities	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Ensure the take-up of the Early Years entitlement, particularly for our most vulnerable families.Support parents, settings, partners, and practitioners to identify emerging needs in children under 5, with systems and processes in place to support this.Make sure we have the right expertise, in the right place, to meet emerging needs of children under 5.Ensure our schools and practitioners are well prepared for meeting the needs of our children transitioning from the Early Years to school, with the right systems and processes in place, including effective collaboration between settings/practitioners.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Ensure an appropriately trained and confident workforce, able to promote inclusivity and identify needs early.Identify, and where possible close, gaps in service delivery for children with emerging needs or at SEN Support.Increase our mental health support to schools to enable them to better meet the needs of children and young people early.Work with colleagues across the health system to develop, and implement, a needs-led approach to neurodiversity.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Increase the capability of our local schools and settings to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.Support our local schools to reduce fixed term and permanent exclusions of children and young people with SEND.Develop systems and processes to support children and young people with SEND moving successfully from primary to secondary education.Work with school partners to identify opportunities for the provision of specialist outreach support into mainstream settings.Support our local schools with the early identification of EBSA and a consistent implementation of provision.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Identify the current, and future, needs of children and young people with SEND to ensure their needs can be met locally.Work with our local mainstream provision to identify opportunities to develop additional SEMH, Autism, MLD and SLD provision.Work with our local maintained special schools to identify opportunities for expansion and exploring with partners opportunities for additional specialist provision.Develop bespoke packages of support for children and young people who are not attending school for health or other reasons.Work with stakeholders to develop an enhanced short breaks offer to better meet the needs of children & young people with SEND and their families locally.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Deliver high quality Alternative Provision locally operating alongside mainstream and special schools to meet the needs of their pupils for some or all of their education.Undertake a needs analysis to ensure that we understand demand and can meet need.Further develop short- and medium-term Alternative Provision to enable students to re-engage with education and return to mainstream schools.Develop short and medium term emergency alternative provision for children and young people who have no educational setting.		2024-9
<p>Enabling the delivery of our priorities.</p> <p>To develop a digital strategy which enables us to collect, use & share data more effectively; and to develop a digital dashboard enabling leaders' effective oversight.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Work with Public Health, and other partners, to improve the SEND content of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) to enable the local area to better meet need in the future.Explore opportunities to digitise Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).Develop a commissioning and quality assurance resource and function to support the placements of children and young people with SEND.Work effectively with our partners to improve governance and oversight of SEND provision.Support the development and expansion of the newly created West Berkshire Parent/Carer Forum ensuring that leaders can respond to the views of children & young people and their families.Enhance the work to support the SEND Youth Forum, ensuring that leaders can respond to the views of children and young people.Ensure the most efficient use of limited financial resources in the High Needs Block of funding.							

Glossary

Abbreviation	Word(s)	Meaning
AP	Alternative Provision	Settings which provide an education to children and young people who are unable to attend a mainstream school.
CYP	Children and young people	The children and young people being thought about.
DBV	Delivering Better Value	A programme run by the Department for Education (DfE) to support Local Authorities, and their partners, to improve the delivery of SEND Services for children and young people whilst working to ensure that funding remains available to deliver these services.
DfE	Department for Education	The DfE have responsibility for children's services and education (including Early Years, Schools, Further and Higher Education Policy, Apprenticeships and wider skills) in England.
DSG	Dedicated Schools Grant	A ring-fenced amount of money from the Government which pays for individual budgets in maintained schools, academies and free schools.
EBSA	Emotional Based School Avoidance	This is when children and young people, who want to attend school, have a reduced, or non-attendance at school due to emotional, mental health or wellbeing issues.
EHENA	Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment	A joined-up assessment of a child or young person's Education, Health and Social Care needs completed by the Local Authority.
EHCP	Education, Health & Care Plan	A plan which details the Education, Health and Social Care support provided to a child or young person with SEND.
HNB	High Needs Block	The budget within the Dedicated Schools Grant that is used to pay for support for children and young people with SEND.
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment	A Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) looks at the current and future health and care needs of the local area which then informs the planning and buying of health, well-being and social care services within that local area.
MLD	Moderate Learning Difficulty	This is when children and young people find it much harder than their peers to develop the skills to understand concepts.
PCF	Parent/Carer Forum	A group of parents or carers of children and young people with SEND who work with the Local Authority and other providers to make sure that the services they provide meet the needs of children and young people with SEND and their families.

PfA	Preparing for Adulthood	The support provided to children and young people with SEND which helps them to improve the independence and life skills they will need as an adult.
Census	School Census	An electronic collection of pupil data from Primary, Secondary, Special Schools and Pupil Referral Units.
SEMH	Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs	A type of special educational need in which children and young people can find it hard to manage their emotions and how they behave.
SEND	Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities	A learning difficulty or disability which requires special educational provision to be made for a child or young person.
SEN Support	SEN Support	This is what schools and similar settings use to find, and meet the needs of, children and young people with SEND.
SLCN	Speech, Language and Communication Needs	This is when someone finds it hard to communicate, both communicating with others, but also understanding what others are communicating to them.
SpLD	Specific Learning Difficulty	This is when someone finds it hard with certain parts of learning for example; they may have Dyslexia or Dyscalculia.



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Innovation in SEND: SEND & Inclusion Strategy (2024-2029)

DELIVERY PLAN 2025/26

The SEND & Inclusion Strategy Delivery Plan sets out the key actions which will drive forward our shared commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND. Delivery of the plan will be coordinated through five dedicated priority groups, ensuring a collaborative and targeted approach to implementation.

As we move to the next phase of delivery, any outstanding actions from the Delivering Better Value (DBV) Programme have been incorporated into this delivery plan for April 2025-March 2026.

The plan will be reviewed annually each February, providing an opportunity to assess progress, reflect on emerging priorities and identify new tasks and enablers for the following 12-month period. This ongoing cycle of review and refinement will ensure that we remain responsive to the evolving needs of children, young people and their families.

From April 2025-March 2026, the priority groups will be:

- Priority 1: Early Years
- Priority 2: Early Intervention
- Priority 3: Inclusion
- Priority's 4&5: Developing Local Specialist Provision and Support (including Strengthening Alternative Provision)
- Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood

We have a set of enablers to support the delivery of the SEND & Inclusion Strategy (2024-2029), with some expanded, adjusted, or introduced from those originally published in the strategy, to ensure maintained momentum and effective delivery of actions outlined in this delivery plan.

The Enablers are:

- Maintain, and build upon the progress made with the development of a digital plan and creation of SEND data dashboards. This will enable us to continue to collect, use and share data more effectively. The evolution of the SEND Data Dashboards will provide leaders with continued effective oversight
- Maintain the established governance structure for signing off data that enables accuracy to be checked, priorities to be identified and actions monitored across all partner agencies.
- Routinely share SEND Data with schools (heads, governors and SENDCos) and use this to collectively identify actions that support improvement
- Work with Public Health, and other partners, to improve the SEND content of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) to enable the local area to better meet need in the future
- Explore opportunities to digitise Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)
- Develop a commissioning and quality assurance resource and function to support the placements of children and young people with SEND
- Review and refresh the Quality Assurance Framework for EHCPs, an example will be provided
- Work effectively with our partners to improve governance and oversight of SEND provision
- Support the development and expansion of the newly created West Berkshire Parent/Carer Forum ensuring that leaders can respond to the views of children & young people and their families
- Enhance the work to support the SEND Youth Forum, ensuring that leaders can respond to the views of children and young people
- Ensure the most efficient use of limited financial resources in the High Needs Block of funding:
 - Clawback
 - Banding exercise
 - Use of Element 2
 - Review of HNB spend
- Develop a West Berkshire Schools Accessibility Policy (example provided) that supports delivery of the local area SEND and Inclusion Strategy:
 - The implementation of this policy will be monitored, particularly through the auditing of school's SEN Information Reports to ensure the requirements of the Accessibility Policy are being met contributing to improving accessibility and inclusion for all pupils with SEND and those who are vulnerable
- We will ensure our SEND Local Offer is a dynamic and user-friendly resource that meets the needs of children, young people, their families and professionals. To achieve this, we will focus on the following areas:
 - Continuous Improvement: Regular reviews and feedback will shape ongoing development, keeping the Local Offer relevant, accessible, and reflective of available support.
 - Effective Governance: A clear decision-making structure will be in place to drive improvements, respond to feedback, and ensure the Local Offer evolves in line with local needs and strategic priorities.
 - Accountable Leadership: An accountable officer will oversee the improvements, statutory compliance and co-production with families and stakeholders.

Priority 1: Early Years

No.	Task & Actions	Timeline	Owner	Governance 1 April 2025- 31 March 2026	RAG Status*	Commentary
1.1	Ensure the take-up of the Early Years education entitlement; particularly for our most vulnerable families.					
1.1.1	Monitor continued implementation of Communication Strategy and Parent Champion Programme to improve engagement, especially of our most vulnerable families.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Interim Head of Early Years and Participation & Engagement (WBC)	Priority 1 Early Years		August 2025: The Coram Parent Champion programme is ongoing with 9 active Parent Champion volunteers with the next round of training planned for Autumn 2025. We are targeting recruitment of volunteers from the Family Hub and Early Help parent community for our next training cohort in order to support our development work in these areas in the next 6-12 months. Parent Champions have supported the co-production and consultation & engagement work around the Family Hubs offer. The Innovation in SEND Blog is in place to provide continued updates to residents around SEND & Inclusion Strategy Developments.
1.1.2	Successful implementation of Early Years childcare entitlement expansion across West Berkshire Early Years settings.	September 2025	Lead Action Owner: Interim Head of Early Years and Participation & Engagement (WBC)	Priority 1 Early Years		August 2025: Engagement with Early Years providers and approximately 120+ additional childcare places created this year via DfE Capital Expansion funding, provides reassurance that sufficient childcare places will be available for September final expansion. Continued analysis is vital to ensure granular understanding of the sufficiency position post September. Work is underway to support 5 West Berkshire schools to open new nurseries in the academic year 25-26 creating additional spaces as well as additional quality EYs provision across target areas of the district.
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none">EY Take up data						
1.2	Support parents, settings, partners, and practitioners to identify emerging needs in children under 5, with systems and processes in place to support this.					
1.2.1	Review referral routes for occupational therapists and paediatricians, ensuring the Local Offer is up to date, effectively links to the BHFT and RBFT websites and that 'One Page Service Offers' (<i>previously plans on a page</i>) are developed, published and reviewed at least annually.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Designated Clinical Officer (BOB ICB) Action Contributor(s): Specialist Information Officer Early Years & Local Offer (WBC) / Practice	Priority 1 Early Years		March 2025: This piece of work sits within the Therapy Transformation within Berkshire West. At present BHFT and RBFT are working with the ICB to simplify the ways both Paediatricians and Occupational Therapists are accessed. This action has therefore moved into this delivery plan until any changes have been embedded into practice. A timescale and action plan have been requested from the ICB, but the ICB do not have a date of when this work will be concluded, although BHFT and RBFT have been asked to expedite this work. This is currently on hold due to two-week JTAI being undertaken in Reading.

			Development Lead for Health Visiting (BHFT)			
1.2.2	Explore the permanent increase to the capacity of the Early Development and Inclusion Team (EDIT) to enable them to respond to the concerns of Early Years Settings for both referred and non-referred children.	May 2025	Lead Action Owner: Learning Support Services Manager Action Contributor(s): EDIT Coordinator (WBC)	Priority 1 Early Years		<p>March 2025: Temporary increase in hours still to be approved via Schools Forum. Schools Forum 10/03 was cancelled therefore there is a delay and uncertainty for EDIT colleagues. Previously discussed there may not be the available funding to increase EDIT hours permanently. This would need to go via Schools Forum for a decision but are exploring whether there is any scope for this to move into the Early Years space.</p> <p>May 2025: The team continues to operate with temporary additional hours, which have been extended for another 12 months. While the extra hours are beneficial, the lack of permanence creates ongoing challenges and stress due to the need for frequent service adjustments. Efforts to secure permanent hours are still ongoing.</p> <p>August 2025: The permanent increase to EDIT budget will be considered as part of the budget setting process. Evidence of impact of the work to date will be considered as part of this process.</p> <p>The EDIT team are in the process of completing a further impact report. Due to the Summer holidays this will be made available in September 2025.</p>
1.2.3	Maintain the uptake of Health Visitor two-year checks at 85% or higher, ensuring early identification of need. Offer 3.5-year checks to families who missed their two-year review and monitor take-up (recognising participation is voluntary).	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Acting Senior Public Health Programme Officer (WBC)	Priority 1 Early Years		<p>August 2025: In the year 2024/2025, 86.6% of two-year Health Visitor checks were completed, 1.6% above target. The Health Visitor Service Delivery information provides further data.</p>
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in the number of children whose needs are identified at pre-school. • Health visitor 2-year check take up data. • Health Visitor 3.5-year check take up data. • EDIT Impact Report. 						
1.3	Make sure we have the right expertise, in the right place, to meet emerging needs of children under 5.					
1.3.1	Develop clear guidance for Early Years settings on what should be ordinarily available for children with SEND.	October 2025	Lead Action Owner: SEND Re-banding Review Lead (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Interim Head of Early Years and Participation & Engagement	Priority 1 Early Years		<p>March 2025: Coproduction is underway.</p> <p>August 2025: Also, ref 3.1.3. Working group, including Paretn Carer Forum have co-produced a 'Best Start / OAP Guide. Communications are formatting it over July / Aug to support accessibility and branding. Two further meetings of working group planned for September and Oct 2025 to finalise it.</p>
1.3.2	Implement and monitor the impact of the revised Early Years training and support offer.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Interim Head of	Priority 1 Early Years		<p>August 2025: The new training and support offer was launched in April 2025, with take up considerably increased e.g. ECAT take up from 5 settings in 2024-2025 to 33 this year. The impact of the new training offer will be monitored as part of school readiness measures and in-person</p>

			Early Years and Participation & Engagement / Early Years Service			footprint visits to all settings this year.
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take up of Early Years Inclusion Fund. • Take up of Early Years Training Offer by settings. • Early Years Training Impact Report 						
1.4	Ensure our schools and practitioners are well prepared for meeting the needs of our children transitioning from the Early Years to school, with the right systems and processes in place, including effective collaboration between settings/practitioners.					
1.4.1	Implement the transitions best practice guidance via ongoing Early Years training and support, ensuring effective delivery of guidance, resources, and strategies to support smooth transitions.	December 2025	Lead Action Owner: Early Years (WBC) Action Contributor(s): EDIT / SEND team (WBC)	Priority 1 Early Years		May 2025: The major transition training was completed last month, delivered collaboratively by the lead officer, the Early Development and Inclusion Team, and a representative from iCollege. All Early Years settings have now received the full guidance electronically, along with separate appendices containing relevant transition forms. In addition, hard copies have been distributed during training sessions or are available for collection from the Family Hub. August 2025: Footprint visits to all Early Years and Reception settings in the academic year 2025-26 will further embed the guidance via direct follow up. In addition, the Early Years new training and support offer will include reference to the transitions guidance and practical support to embed.
1.4.2	Review funding mechanisms for children under five with SEND in pre-school settings and maintained nursery and primary schools to ensure children have continuity of support on transition.	August 2025	Lead Action Owner: Interim Head of Early Years and Participation & Engagement (WBC) Action Contributor(s): SEND Team / SEND Re-banding Review Lead (WBC)	Priority 1 Early Years		March 2025: This work is partially completed and is being picked up within Phase 2 of the banding review work with an anticipated completion date of August 2025. August 2025: In addition to the banding review developments, extensive work is underway to review funding for specialist Early Years provision for children with complex needs. E.g. Dingley's Promise and the exploration of additional specialist SEND Early Years provision across the district.
1.4.3	Continued implementation of universal and targeted measures to address school readiness, with measurable outcomes reviewed annually to assess impact and effectiveness.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Interim Head of Early Years and Participation & Engagement (WBC)	Priority 1 Early Years		May 2025: It was noted that while the Early Years Service is already delivering substantial work around school readiness, their efforts alone are not sufficient to achieve the best outcomes for children. To strengthen impact, there is a need for broader collaboration, particularly involving Public Health and Library Services. August 2025: Initial Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Profile data for 2024-2025 demonstrates that our combined approach – delivery high-quality, universal Early Years support alongside

			Action Contributor(s): Early Years Service (WBC)			targeted interventions – is having a significant measurable difference to outcomes for children. 72.4% if children reached a Good Level of Development, surpassing the national average by 4%. West Berkshire ranking has moved from 63 rd in 2023-2024 to 16 th in 2024-2025 (44 places). Work has begun to drive further improvement and ensure sustainability to meet newly established target for West Berkshire (75.8% of children achieving a Good Level of Development by the end of the 2027/2028 academic year. This will be achieved by development of Family Hubs/Early Help as part of the Family First reforms, as well as implementing additional Early Years targeted programmes to address school readiness.
1.4.5	Review numbers of children that require enhanced support in order to be successful in Mainstream School to ensure needs are being met and that they are able to stay in mainstream if it's appropriate. Use this data to review how needs should be met going forward.	December 2025	Lead Action Owner: EDIT Coordinator (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Learning Support Services Manager / SEMH Service / EYFS Improvement Adviser (WBC)	Priority 1 Early Years		August 2025: The EDIT team will provide an update on this action in September.
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Packages of support in place for children transitioning into primary schools. Numbers of statutory requests at Early Years/ Reception/ Yr1. 						
Priority 2: Early Intervention						
No.	Task & Actions	Timeline	Owner	Governance 1 April 2025-31 March 2026	RAG Status*	Commentary
2.1	Ensure an appropriately trained and confident workforce, able to promote inclusivity and identify needs early.					
2.1.1	Investigate the development and associated costs of creating an accredited training course for Teaching Assistants (TAs) and prepare a proposal to present to Headteachers to assess interest and uptake.	Longer term: 2025-2026	Lead Action Owner: Learning Support Services Manager (WBC)	Priority 2 - Early Intervention		April 2025: Discussed in Early Intervention priority meeting. Discussed how some of our most vulnerable children in the most need of inclusion, can sometimes be supported by the least trained. Decided it would be best to do some research first around what accredited training programmes are already available and what cost this would entail. This would then be presented to Headteacher's as there would be a cost associated to schools to 'buy in'. Also need to consider the health element, so ensuring the right people are involved. The CALT team would be heavily involved in developing this and they are currently involved in the Dyslexia Friendly Guidelines Award. August 2025: This action is a longer-term action for the year 2025-2026 and is on track to be completed by July 2026.
2.1.2	If development of accredited training course for TA's is deemed feasible and cost-effective, design and produce the course content.	Longer term: 2026-2027	Lead Action Owner: Learning Support Services Manager (WBC)	Priority 2 - Early Intervention		August 2025: See above for full update. If following research, this is deemed feasible, the content of the training will be designed and implemented, ensuring all the relevant colleagues are involved.

2.1.3	Ensure all advice writers and SEND Services access the Levels 1 and 2 Council for Disabled Children (CDC) online training, and where appropriate the service specific advice writing online training. Embed this training within induction programmes and appraisal processes to ensure ongoing professional development. Consider a multi-agency workshop with the CDC to support this.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner(s): All Line Managers/ Service Leads across services (WBC / BOB ICB / BHFT / RBH) Action Contributor(s): SEND Strategy Officer	Priority 2 - Early Intervention		<p>April 2025: Action is arising out of the SEND Funding Review. Discussed in Early Intervention Priority meeting. There has been a request for more information around the training and the time commitment involved to understand who in each service needs to complete this. It was agreed that as a system we need to do some work on how we write advice and how this is translated into an EHCP. Draft plans are in some cases (CYPIT for example) checked to ensure information has been translated how it was intended. The SEND Strategy Officer will pick up the concerns with the SEND Re-Banding Review Lead and DMT.</p> <p>July 2025: The DBV Programme Coordinator and SEND Strategy Officer will follow up with completing a list of all advice writers and communicating with service leads to ensure completion. There's also an opportunity to reach out to the Council for Disabled Children to arrange group-based online training sessions.</p> <p>August 2025: A rolling programme of training has been devised that all SEN Managers, EHC Coordinators and SEN Officers will have completed the CDC online training by Easter 2026, monitored by the Interim Principal SEN Manager. Other members of the team (Assistant SEN Officers) will be encouraged to undertake the training as optional Personal Development. Any new members of staff will complete the CDC online programme as part of their induction.</p>
2.1.4	<p>Work with health colleagues to review ASD diagnostic rates and pathways, using census and primary need data, alongside the evaluation of the new needs-led approach and the implementation of the 'Portsmouth model'. This review will inform service planning within the Council's Autism Team, particularly in relation to supporting children and young people on the diagnostic pathway.</p> <p>In parallel, collaborate with health system partners to review access criteria for the Autism Team, exploring options to increase capacity and enable earlier intervention through a revised service offer. All work will be aligned with recent changes to the Neurodivergence pathway and the move towards a more needs-led approach.</p>	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Designated Clinical Officer BOB ICB Action Contributor(s): Learning Support Services Manager (WBC)	Priority 2 - Early Intervention		<p>August 2025: New action in August 2025 which joins together previous actions around Autism and the Neurodivergence Transformation Work.</p> <p>Progress continues on the Neurodivergence (ND) transformation work, overseen by the Berkshire Neurodivergence Transformation Board. The aim is to shift towards a more needs-led approach to supporting neurodivergent children and young people. Board members have expressed a preference for adopting elements of the 'Portsmouth model', although what this will look like in the Berkshire context is still being developed.</p> <p>This shift will have implications for the Autism Team. As outlined in the April 2025 update, access to the team has traditionally required a formal diagnosis due to high demand. In response, the Learning Support Services Manager has submitted a proposal to the Service Director – Education & SEND for an additional post within the Autism Team to support children and young people on the diagnostic pathway. This proposal will be considered as part of the upcoming budget-setting process.</p>
2.1.5	<p>Establish an Early Intervention and Vulnerable Pupils Panel and implement an Early Years Early Intervention Framework to strengthen multi-agency support and improve outcomes for children requiring additional help. This joint approach will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring together representatives from SEND, Early Years, Educational 	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: TBC Action Contributor(s): TBC			<p>August 2025: A new action was added in August 2025 following an audit of five Early Years children's journeys conducted by a DfE advisor. This action is scheduled for discussion at the Early Intervention meeting on 8th September 2025, where the wording will be reviewed for appropriateness and a lead action owner, along with contributing individuals, will be identified.</p>

	<p>Psychology, Health, and Family Support to ensure timely, coordinated input.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review Early Years cases to identify where additional support may be needed, including guidance for EHCP requests and alternative early intervention pathways.• Support settings in gathering robust evidence for EHCP applications, with early identification and EP involvement where appropriate.• Provide clear, written and verbal communication to families, particularly when an EHCP is not agreed, alongside signposting to alternative support offers.• Link to the Best Start Ordinarily Available information to ensure families receive consistent, transparent, and timely support.					
<p>Measures of success (how will we know?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training offer take up.• Survey on practitioners confidence in meeting SEND needs.• Requests for therapy assessments data.• Reduction in requests for EHC Needs Assessments with needs being met at an earlier stage.• Increase in the number of SPENCER 3D profiles being completed allowing for analysis of pilot and a decision as to whether to roll out more widely.• Increased quality of EHCPs using Invision360.						
2.2	Identify, and where possible close, gaps in service delivery for children with emerging needs or at SEN Support					
2.2.2	Review One Page Service Offer (previously referred to as Plans on a Page) annually, or when there is a significant change, ensuring revised service offers are well communicated and publicised on the Local Offer. New service offers to be completed for new services.	March 2026	<p>Lead Action Owner: SEND Strategy Officer (WBC)</p> <p>Action Contributor(s): Head of SEND / Specialist Info Officer EYs & Local Offer (WBC)</p>	Priority 2 - Early Intervention		<p>April 2025: Previously known ‘plans on a page’ are published on the Local Offer. Work is ongoing to ensure these are hosted on both parent and professional areas, rather than sitting within the FAQ section of the Local Offer.</p> <p>July 2025: Current One Page Service Offers will be reviewed through SEND Strategy Priority groups as appropriate as well as through the development work currently being undertaken around the Local Offer.</p> <p>August 2025: A full review of all One Page Service Offers will be completed by March 2026. We expect to publish a new service One Page Service Offer which details the Universal, Targeted and Specialist Short Breaks offer in the coming months; this is being co-produced with the West Berkshire Parent/Carer Forum.</p>

2.2.3	Ensure existing SEN support teams work in a more coordinated way and provide a single point of referral/ access.	TBC	Lead Action Owner: TBC Action Contributor(s): TBC	Priority 2 - Early Intervention		April 2025: Update provided in Priority 2 meeting. Single point of access for SEMH services remains ongoing. This will include all SEMH services and possibly also the Autism Team. There are ongoing discussions as to whether it is appropriate for the Autism Team or not. We are looking at introducing a triage system who will decide which team is best to provide the support. This is also linked to early support funding. Currently, a lot of the teams have different pots of funding, which can become hard to manage.
2.2.4	Arising out of the SEND thematic review, review and evaluate the impact of the current level of support services from the Emotional Mental Health Academy accessed through Early Help. ensuring that services are identifying and meeting needs of children requiring additional support at Early Help in relation to mental health and improving the outcomes.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Team Manager Contact Advice & Assessment Service (WBC)	Priority 2 - Early Intervention		April 2025: Update provided in Priority 2 meeting. Services that are being offered at Level 2 are not currently being changed as we do not want to anticipate the outcome of the Early Help consultation. It is however anticipated that something which will come out of the consultation will be around children and young people's well-being and mental health. We think there will be big changes following this consultation and there is also a focus on Early Help from the Government. We have received the new prevention children's services grant. We want to use this grant in the right way by listening to everyone's feedback and using this in our service design. August 2025: The SEND Strategy Officer and Service Manager YJST will consider whether the Early Help Consultation outcomes should inform changes to the Emotional Health Academy support at Level 2.
2.2.5	Collaborate with Public Health and the Health & Wellbeing Board to gather and share insights, including relevant data from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). This information will support the early identification of emerging needs and assist in the commissioning of support & provision, ensuring it is aligned with local health and wellbeing priorities.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Head of SEND (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Commissioning Team / Service Lead – Consultant in Public Health / Service Director – Education & SEND (WBC)	Priority 2 - Early Intervention		April 2025: A discussion was had in the Early Intervention priority group around the group deciding what they would like to get from the JSNA and that it can be what we want it to be e.g. a full assessment of need. It was decided it might be helpful for the new data analyst to share a presentation on the wider needs assessment – they will attend the next meeting (2 nd June 2025) to share this. It was also discussed that we need to ensure we are looking at what data is available in other Council departments to being together a broader picture. August 2025: See update to enabler 7.4.
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take up of Early Help Services • Hits on Early Help Local Offer • Reduced education placement breakdown, reduced exclusions/ suspensions, increased attendance • Survey on practitioners' confidence in meeting SEND needs • No of schools accessing additional support service 						
2.3	Increase our mental health support to schools to enable them to better meet the needs of children and young people early.					
2.3.1	Implement a whole School Mental Health Project, delivered through the Education Psychology team, to be expanded and offered to all schools in West Berkshire, to be evaluated after one year.	September 2025	Lead Action Owner: Virtual School Headteacher (WBC)	Priority 2 - Early Intervention		April 2025: Currently looking at what Phase 2 of the whole school mental health project will look like. There is no DBV funding available going forward so we are looking at other streams of funding to support on a one-off basis. There is a strong desire for a Phase two. Not just from schools that are currently taking part, but also because of the ongoing networking. There is a particular interest from secondary schools, which is really positive as we only had two secondary schools sign up to phase one.

						<p>August 2025: Funding for Phase 2 from health was approved, provided a Memorandum of Understanding and evaluation is provided. Phase 2 will look different to Phase 1 following feedback e.g. no Birmingham Newman course, as this had low engagement. A focus on Phase 2 is bringing the work into standard practice, as opposed to a standalone project – it is hoped to co-facilitate network sessions with the Therapeutic Thinking Support Team (TTST). Providers are currently being identified e.g. using KCA instead of Flourish, as our funding allocation is smaller this year, so we need to ensure value for money. Onboarding for schools will take place in September-October 2025.</p> <p>August 2025 - Data from Phase 1 of Whole School Mental Health Project:</p> <p>Attendance: As a whole cohort, attendance at our project schools was higher than the West Berkshire Average (and national average) at 93.86% (WB: 93.2% / National: 93.6%).</p> <p>Persistent/Severely Persistent Absence: As a whole cohort, rates of PA/SPA were lower at project schools compared to local and national averages at 15.39% (WB: 20.5% / National: 18.7%)</p> <p>Suspensions: As a cohort, there is an overall reduction in suspensions from their 2023/2024 levels (data collected mid-July) – 310 this year, down from 389 last year.</p>
2.3.2	Provide a supervision offer to schools to give staff a safe and reflective space to discuss operations and interventions. The supervision offer will support school leaders to put theory into practice and mitigate the risk of secondary trauma and burnout. This will begin with a trial with Headteachers, and project leads in the pilot schools.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Virtual School Headteacher (WBC)	Priority 2 - Early Intervention		<p>April 2025: See update to action 2.3.2 regarding securing funding.</p> <p>August 2025: Based on reduced funding, Headteacher supervision cannot be part of Phase 2 (however termly mentoring provides a similar benefit to participating schools). Currently, there is not a feasible way of delivering this, although some schools have taken it upon themselves to arrange for their Headteachers. Consideration will be given to raising this through the Governor network, however there is recognition that school level funding will be a barrier.</p>
<p>Measures of success (how will we know?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluations of impact of training delivered for workshops Staff confidence in applying learnt strategies within the classroom and how well-supported staff feel by SLT (before/after) Exclusions – qualitative feedback on how situations may have been managed differently since the training Alongside exclusions – reduction in number of incidents escalated to SLT Confidence in our project leaders of changing their ways of working - how confident do they feel applying knowledge Info on how beneficial school leaders feel the additional support for them has been 						
2.4	Work with colleagues across the health system to develop, and implement, a needs-led approach to neurodiversity.					
2.4.1	Raise awareness amongst parents and practitioners of ordinarily available services for neurodiverse children which can be accessed without a diagnosis. Monitor the impact by tracking access to, and engagement with, these services. Involve the Parent/Carer Forum and Parent Champions in shaping and sharing information to enhance reach and trust.	March 2026	<p>Lead Action Owner: Interim Head of Early Years and Participation & Engagement (WBC)</p> <p>Action Contributor(s): Designated Clinical Officer</p>	Priority 2 - Early Intervention		<p>April 2025: The Priority 2 group heard that the Service Manager – YJS has been having conversations with a company called Beebot AI. A lot of Local Authorities have done some collaboration with them around a digital self-service offer for families. This has the ability to redirect families away from the front door for those really low-level universal needs.</p> <p>July 2025: Currently, a market engagement event is underway to explore available offers from various providers for early help services. While Beebot is one option, others are being considered, and no decisions will be made yet to avoid impacting any future procurement or commissioning processes.</p> <p>August 2025: The draft co-produced Early Years Ordinarily Available Provision document is due to</p>

			(BOB ICB)			<p>be completed by September 2025. The Digital Early Help offer plans continue to progress following co-production activity in May-July 2025, a direct award to a provider is now in scope.</p> <p>Additionally, Council officers, in collaboration with the West Berkshire Parent Carer Forum, have been visiting Short Breaks providers as part of a data-gathering initiative. This work will inform a competitive tender process for Short Breaks provision and help identify the range of services that are typically available. The Short Breaks Statement for 2025 is currently being co-produced during August and September. Furthermore, the West Berkshire Parent Carer Forum is developing a 'One Page Service Offer' for Short Breaks to ensure the Local Offer is clear and accessible. This overview will outline the universal, targeted, and specialist Short Breaks available.</p>
<p>Measures of success (how will we know?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Increased take up of pre-diagnosis offerImproved waiting times from referral to treatment for children aged 8+ and under 8.						
<p>Priority 3: Inclusion</p>						
No.	Task & Actions	Timeline	Owner	Governance 1 April 2025- 31 March 2026	RAG Status*	Commentary
3.1	Increase the capability of our local schools to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND in a mainstream setting.					
3.1.1	Maintaining review of schools that may have capacity for additional provisions over the next academic year	March 2026	<p>Lead Action Owner: Education Place Planning & Development Manager (WBC)</p> <p>Action Contributor(s): SEND Strategy Officer (WBC)</p>	Priority 3 - Inclusion		<p>May 2025: Being reviewed as part of work taking place in Priority 4 of the SEND & Inclusion Strategy and increasing local specialist placement capacity.</p> <p>In Early Years and primary education, the main areas of need are autism, SEMH and moderate learning difficulties.</p> <p>August 2025: Levels of current and forecast surplus places in mainstream schools is reviewed annually, and this data is fed into SEND Sufficiency work to increase specialist capacity. Examples of this are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Spurcroft Primary School: Work is currently being undertaken to utilise surplus capacity at the school to accommodate an expanded Early Years SEND Specialist Provision (Dingley's Promise).John O'Guant Secondary School: Proposed utilisation of surplus capacity to provide an MLD Resource Provision.Francis Baily Primary School: Proposed utilisation of surplus capacity to provide an ASD/SLCN Resourced Provision.
3.1.2	Developing and sharing a best practice guide to support schools and settings on the most effective use of funding Element 2. Review the use of element 2 to promote targeted intervention at SEN	April 2025	<p>Lead Action Owner: SEND Re-banding Review Lead (WBC)</p>	Priority 3 - Inclusion		<p>April 2025: The SEND Strategy Officer to request an update from the SEND Re-banding Review Lead.</p> <p>May 2025: The banding review for in mainstream schools and special schools has been done. Meetings with resource bases and specialist units are ongoing to ensure that the allocated funding aligns with the identified needs.</p>

	support through early identification of need and timely access to appropriate resources.		Action Contributor(s): Service Director – Education & SEND (WBC)			<p>August 2025: This work appears to align with Helen Redding’s current focus—co-producing with schools to shape the future design of the banding tool. The documentation will be published on the local offer and will be available for all.</p> <p>The EHCP descriptors to support top up funding will support this, as will the developing OAP Guidance which included examples of best practice at SEND Support. New draft Banding Framework agreed by Working Group. Workshops with schools planned for October to inform any further amendments required. Funding modelling being completed over August to take to working group in September. Working Group meetings planned for September and November. Aim to complete work by December with a phased transition plan for implementation. Guide to Schools funding to support SEND ready to go out in September 2025.</p>
3.1.3	Refresh OAP Guidance and link it to the process and application request format for EHC Assessment requests.	December 2025	Lead Action Owner: SEND Re-banding Review Lead (WBC)	Priority 3 - Inclusion		<p>August 2025: OAP guidance is linked to the above action and will be co-produced with the group HR is running.</p> <p><u>Early Years</u> Drafted and with comms team. Aim to be finalised by October half term.</p> <p><u>Secondary</u> Amendments being completed from working group and will be with Comms team August 2025. Next meeting September 2025 with working group for sign off. Aim to complete by end October 2025.</p> <p><u>Primary</u> Two meetings held and being drafted. Meetings planned for Autumn term to finalise. Expected sign off Dec 2025.</p> <p>A self-assessment tool is also being developed – looking at making this digital.</p>
3.1.4	Develop and implement Dyslexia Friendly Guidelines Award	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Learning Support Services Manager (WBC) Action Contributor(s): CALT Team (WBC)	Priority 3 - Inclusion		<p>May 2025: New action added May 2025.</p> <p>June 2025: This work is ongoing and is expected to influence changes in practice related to specific learning difficulties (SpLD), particularly dyslexia.</p> <p>August 2025: This work continues to progress. It is anticipated that this will be launched in September with work beginning with pilot schools. The goal is to offer this service free to ‘Core Plus’ schools, with others able to purchase it as the Cognition and Learning Team (CALT) operates as a traded service.</p>
3.1.5	Develop clear guidance to support admissions into specialist provisions in mainstream schools and special schools in West Berkshire to clarify how specialist provision fits into the graduated approach to support and when a specialist provision might be appropriate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance from Phase 2 of funding (banding review) to inform admissions to specialist provisions 	December 2025	Lead Action Owner: SEND Re-banding Review Lead Action Contributor(s): SEND Strategy Officer / Learning Support Services Manager / Head of SEND / Interim Principal SEN Manager (WBC)	Priority 3 - Inclusion		<p>August 2025: Will be developed from descriptors framework with schools. Aim to complete Dec 2025</p>
3.1.6	Record secondary and other needs	March 2026	Lead Action	Priority 3 -		<p>April 2025: Previous Principal SEN Manager explained that it would take some time for all SEN</p>

	for pupils with SEND and that the correct primary need is recorded – linked to the data quality and Annual Review process		Owner: Interim Principal SEN Manager (WBC)	Inclusion		<p>needs to be updated in Capita ONE, due to needing to wait for an Annual Review to have taken place. The SEN team continue to have monthly data cleanse days. We are confident the data we are starting to see coming through is more accurate than previously. The Internal Data Task Group is discussing SCAP forecasts, and it is hoped the next time this data is ‘run’ we will see a more accurate picture of types of SEND needs given the data cleansing work but also the developments that have been undertaken to the Capita ONE system; ensuring old ‘codes’ have been decommissioned.</p> <p>August 2025: There are no further updates. It will take the cycle of the Annual Review process for all Primary and Secondary needs to be updated.</p>
3.1.7	Develop and implement a multi-agency approach to reducing the number of children and young people with EHCPs who Electively Home Educated (EHE) as an alternative to school, due to unmet needs. We will ensure that unmet needs within school provision are addressed through improved practice, strengthened sufficiency, and consistent application of policy around Personal Budgets.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Interim Principal SEN Manager (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Interim Education Development Officer – SEND Projects / Principal EWO & Lead Officer for Safeguarding and Acting Service Manager – Access, Vulnerable Learners & Families (WBC)	Priority 3 - Inclusion		<p>March 2025: Work around the thematic review/visit focussed on children not in school, where Elective Home Education was a key element. Learning from the review will inform work in this area moving forward, including looking at the sharing of information when Social Care is not involved with a child/family and access to services when a child/young person is not in school. The SEND Strategy Officer will attend DMT to discuss this action and how any future expansion of this action may need to look in this delivery plan.</p> <p>July 2025: Feedback provided by the PCF: Families who electively home educate children with EHCPs are feeling increasingly anxious and isolated due to the upcoming Children’s Well-being in Schools Bill and the autumn White Paper. Many fear these changes could limit their rights and leave home education as their only viable option, yet they’re reluctant to engage and often remain under the radar.</p> <p>The attendance team receive positive feedback on experiences from families they work with who speak highly of the help and support provided to them by the team.</p> <p>August 2025: This action has been reworded but maintains a focus on EHE. We have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed the EHE policy in August 2025, which is being taken through the appropriate approval channels. Improved website information. Surveyed the EHE community on how we can support more and are looking at communication moving forward, including the suggestion of forums. There is a termly EHE newsletter in place. There is active support and contact details are shared with the entire EHE community. All EHE pupils’ education provision is assessed for suitability annually – the process has been improved and assessment strengthened – those without suitable provision are identified and a process is put in place to improve. All EHE pupils with an EHCP should have Annual Reviews where the quality of education is assessed. However, due to current capacity restraints within the SEND Team, we are unable to consistently meet our statutory responsibilities in relation to these reviews. Regular meetings are in place to share information and data with Virtual School, EHE and CME to monitor any child with a Social Worker and plan for improvement where required. A policy on Educational Neglect is being created. A dip-dive into CP/CIN plans to ensure Education is included and is SMART. Improved Fair Access Panel (FAP) Protocol to ensure the swift return of pupils to school where there are issues. A policy on Personal Budgets is to be reviewed in August/September 2025.
3.1.9	Enhance secondary schools’ confidence in meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND, by providing targeted training, guidance and	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Head of SEND (WBC)	Priority 3 - Inclusion		<p>March 2025: This action has been added to the delivery plan due to concerns raised by LA colleagues around school’s ethos around inclusion, responding to consultations stating they cannot meet needs and not consistently making reasonable adjustments e.g. use of sensory aids. This action ties into the below action around Annual Reviews.</p>

	opportunities for partnership working, ensuring a more inclusive approach to admissions and provision.		Action Contributor(s): Principal Adviser for School Improvement (WBC)			<p>April 2025: Discussed in the Priority 3 group that the children and young people coming through are displaying more complex needs and there is a real issue with schools being able to recruit.</p> <p>May 2025: There is a notable discrepancy in the number of pupils with EHCP in some secondary schools, compared to others. This highlights the need to build greater confidence and consistency across secondary settings in identifying and supporting pupils with additional needs.</p> <p>August 2025: This action is dependent on the appointment of a Head of SEND, a post which is not yet filled. The action will remain on hold until such time a Head of SEND is in post.</p>
3.1.10	Review and strengthen capacity within the SEND Service to ensure Annual Reviews are completed in line with statutory requirements.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Head of SEND (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Service Director – Education & SEND (WBC)	Priority 3 - Inclusion		<p>March 2025: Annual Reviews have been highlighted as a risk on the risk register. There is a particular concern around schools responding to consultations stating they cannot meet need, when this may be able to be avoided if EHCPs had been amended in a timely manner.</p> <p>April 2025: Discussed in the Priority 3 group as a high priority. It was shared that there is a case that is currently going through tribunal, seemingly unnecessarily, due to a school saying they can meet need on consultation based on outdated paperwork, when the placement is inappropriate. There was also concern raised of delays in responding to Annual Reviews delays parents right of appeal.</p> <p>August 2025: The importance of having sufficient capacity to meet our statutory duties around Annual Reviews was discussed at the SEND Strategic Improvement Board. This issue is being actively managed at the director level, with involvement from the Lead Member. Work is currently underway to secure the necessary budget to strengthen this capacity.</p>
3.1.11	Develop and enhance data collection in the Capita ONE system around Annual Reviews. This may include amending the Annual Review involvement to allow for the recording of additional data relating to Annual Reviews. This will improve tracking of Annual Review completion and enable more effective monitoring through the SEND data dashboard.	December 2025	Lead Action Owner: Interim Principal SEN Manager (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Principal Systems Support Officer (WBC)	Priority 3 - Inclusion		<p>May 2025: The Interim Principal SEN Manager is working closely with the systems team to develop the Capita ONE system. There is a strategic review of the Capita ONE system to ensure all purchased modules are being utilised. This was originally scheduled for January but was moved to May due to OFSTED and then moved back to July by Capita. This will be added to the risk register. The Annual Review data has previously ‘fallen off’ the data dashboard. The team are new to using PowerBI and are working really hard to maintain and develop the dashboard. This will be added to the risk register. This action is also contingent on having the capacity within the SEND Team to respond to Annual Reviews.</p> <p>August 2025: A Strategic Review was held on 24 July, during which ongoing concerns were raised about the CapitaONE/MRI system’s ability to meet the operational needs of the SEND team. Particular issues included the additional costs associated with system modifications and training. These findings will inform the development of the business case for adopting the Idox EHC Hub (see Enabler 7.5).</p> <p>In response to Annual Reviews not being processed due to long-standing shortfall in staffing (at least two years), a substantial short-term investment has been provided to the SEN Team to enable an Interim Annual Review Officer to join from September 2025 to March 2026. The initial focus will be to process Year 6 and Year 11 Annual Reviews in readiness for Phase Transition. This additional resource will not only have a measurable impact, it will also enable the Interim Principal SEN Manager to provide data that will give clarity on the possible level of permanent recruitment required in order to meet the statutory duties for Annual Reviews.</p>
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in no. of inclusion spaces/ resource bases, including in planning stage • Reduction in number of statutory assessment requests from schools • Fewer requests for statutory assessments in Early Years and KS1 • Schools confidence in ability to meet needs at Element 2 (SURVEY) 						
3.2	Support our local schools to reduce fixed term and permanent exclusions of					

	children and young people with SEND.					
3.2.1	Develop a Delivery Plan to support schools in reducing the number of fixed term and permanent exclusions of children and young people with SEND. Keep delivery plan under review to monitor impact. Intelligence could be used from the secondary pastoral collaborative group	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Team Manager Exclusions / Head of SEND (WBC)	Priority 3 - Inclusion		<p>March 2025: Initial delivery of this action had been delayed due to there being no Service Manager for SEMH in post. A first draft delivery plan has been produced and is in the consultation phase. It is anticipated the finalised delivery plan will be implemented in March 2025 but does need to be looked at alongside an Alternative Provision Strategy. The embedded delivery plan remains incomplete as further developments are required.</p> <p>April 2025: No further updates since March. It is important to have a Head of SEND in post to input into this.</p> <p>August 2025: There are a number of variables that have affected the increase in suspensions and exclusion rates across the LA that need to be addressed such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School's unable to meet spectrum of need • Schools' finances • Schools' desire to reduce exclusions and suspensions • High challenge/high support for schools who have the higher number of suspensions and exclusions • Parental perception • SEND funding streams • Lack of SEND placements • Reduced tolerance • Differing approach to behaviour across schools – we hope this will be addressed through the Ordinarily Available provision work • Reduced support available e.g. reduction in iCollege provision and AP places • Capacity in inclusion team • Skills deficit <p>It is imperative that there is the buy-in from schools and that there is a shared vision across the Local Area. A delivery plan has been produced.</p> <p>The delivery plan draft is nearing completion. Leads within the delivery plan have been fully consulted and progress is being made against actions within the plan. 30% of actions are on track with a further 30% on track with some minor issues. Half-termly updates will be sought from named leads. Support from the Commissioning Team and input from the Head of SEND (when in post) are required to take some actions forward. The delivery plan and recent exclusions data will be presented to Children & Young People's Scrutiny Board in September.</p>
3.2.2	Review communication and information sharing processes across teams within education, and more broadly, to ensure information is shared at the earliest opportunity.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Head of SEND (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH (WBC)	Priority 3 - Inclusion		<p>March 2025: Delivery of this action was delayed due to there being no Service Manager for SEMH in post. A review of the Capita ONE system is underway as well as work on aligning services (Emotional Health Academy, Therapeutic Thinking Support Team, Medical Tuition Service, Autism Advisory Service) via a common referral pathway and triage system. This work is still in development. The use of three potential data management systems (Capita ONE, Mosaic and IAPTUS) could still create data sharing issues moving forward and will need to be mitigated.</p> <p>April 2025: There is concern that the strategic review of the Capita ONE system keeps getting pushed back, this is key to ensuring information sharing across professionals. There is work underway to align services in terms of the referral process (see priority 2 for a full update).</p> <p>August 2025: The Strategic Review of CapitaONE is now largely complete, with one education team still outstanding. In early August, a discussion was held with the wider education management team to emphasise the importance of applying the insights gained from the review. The aim is to reduce reliance on spreadsheets maintained outside the system, thereby improving data accuracy</p>

						and ensuring information is accessible to those who need it.
3.2.3	Develop a sharing of best practice guide to support schools in effectively implementing the therapeutic approaches training they have received.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Head of SEND (WBC)	Priority 3 - Inclusion		August 2025: There is a successful and well attended Therapeutic Network currently in place and is run by the lead for Therapeutic Approaches. We currently have a training and development lead who will take this forward. There is a requirement to understand if a best practice guide is the most appropriate action. We also need to link with the AATIMH Project to understand the full range of current available training and build on the current therapeutic network.
3.2.4	Monitor the implementation of the amalgamated grant allocation process, ensuring it aligns with service support and provision requirements established through the joint triage system. Track outcomes and impact as part of an iterative approach to service delivery, using findings to inform ongoing improvements.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH (WBC) Action Contributor(s): SEND Re-banding Review Lead (WBC)	Priority 3 - Inclusion		March 2025: Alongside the alignment of services grants will be amalgamated and allocated against service support and provision requirements established via a joint triage system. Monitoring of outcomes/impact will form part of an iterative approach to service delivery. August 2025: See update to action 2.2.3. Looking at introducing early support funding which amalgamates all funding currently accessed by schools. This would result in a single funding approach and a single triage for referral.
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in exclusion rates (fixed-term and permanent) • Attendance rates: Improvement in overall school attendance • Student engagement and wellbeing measures: High levels of student satisfaction and engagement (school's own measures) • Increase in number of behaviour polices which reflect the therapeutic, relational and trauma informed approach • Changes to the referral rates to, and outcomes from, support services 						
3.3	Develop systems and processes to support children and young people with SEND moving successfully from primary to secondary education.					
3.3.1	Measure the impact of the year 6 to year 7 transition support programme, ensuring its continued delivery and assessing whether any changes are needed to enhance support for students.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Learning Support Services Manager (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Team Manager Exclusions / Head of SEND (WBC)	Priority 3 - Inclusion		April 2025: The programme is progressing with visits having been made to every school who is involved in the programme. It would have been ideal to have started the programme in September as it has taken some time to get the permission slips back. Schools will be revisited to monitor completion of checklist and there will be a plan in place for each child participating in the project. August 2025: A TA is in post three days a week, supporting 32 pupils identified as at risk of unsuccessful transition from mainstream to maintained placements. With targeted input, the aim is to help these children remain in mainstream education. The team are working on an impact report, with the aim of making this post permanent.
3.3.2	Ensure a clear communication plan for transition guidance is in place and work towards embedding earlier transition planning for children and young people with SEND (EHCP & SEN Support).	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Head of SEND (WBC) Action	Priority 3 - Inclusion		April 2025: This has been shared with schools in the form of a booklet and some briefing sessions were held before Christmas. Schools have had lots of opportunity to discuss it and it was completed in conjunction with a variety of different parties. August 2025: The transition process consists of two key areas: direct work with children and efforts to embed the transition data spreadsheet, which saw some progress despite challenges and

	This will be done by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing a structured plan to share transition guidance with Headteachers each autumn, setting clear expectations and timelines. Work towards transition planning beginning in Year 5. 		Contributor(s): Learning Support Services Manager / Team Manager Exclusions (WBC)			confusion in its implementation last year.
3.3.3	Create a West Berkshire Relational Inclusion Policy for Education. The strategy will encompass other work strands e.g. transition and fair access and will set a standard for inclusion which will benefit all young people and learning communities in West Berkshire.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Virtual School Headteacher (WBC)	Priority 3 - Inclusion		<p>April 2025: There was a relational policy workshop day back in March, as a result, we have been able to co-produce with our participating schools what we think a policy framework would look like. Once it is all signed off and ratified, schools will be able to adopt and adapt it as they see fit. It is 95% written. It sort of sits on top of other policies e.g. behaviour policies. One clear golden thread through the new OFSTED framework is the feeling of belonging and this sets out what schools need to be doing to ensure children and young people feel like they belong and feel secure in school. It includes things like the therapeutic thinking team interventions. The policy framework will be shared once it has been signed off. As a project (mental health project), we are looking at securing funding on public health grounds instead to secure funding for Phase two. We have put a proposal together for public health funding, which will be submitted by the end of May. Alongside this, we are also getting expressions of interest from schools to support the public health initiative. If we have buy in from another 10 schools, it is worth investing in.</p> <p>July 2025: We are awaiting confirmation regarding potential health funding to support rolling out the project next year under a revised title. The current title - "Attachment and Trauma-Informed Mental Health Project" - was recognised as lacking broad appeal. The next meeting is scheduled for mid-July.</p> <p>August 2025: Phase 1 schools have now (mostly) put the Relational Policy to their Governors and we were invited to some Full Governing Boards to share. We are expecting that Phase 2 will provide some support for the 'original' schools as they are starting to implement the policy into practice. In really positive news, our Phase 1 schools have also expressed an interest in remaining part of our network and being a 'buddy' for Phase 2 schools.</p>
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in the number of fixed term and permanent exclusions. No. of children with an EHCP in a phased transfer year group remaining in mainstream including reduction in requests for specialist placements at transitions points No of children on SEN Support in a phased transfer year group transferring without recourse to an EHC assessment request. Reduction in placements at AP and INMSS made at secondary transition 						
3.4	Work with school partners to identify opportunities for the provision of specialist outreach support into mainstream settings.					
3.4.1	Review and develop special school outreach service, with identified funding and revised Service Level Agreement.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Learning Support Services Manager (WBC) Action Contributor(s):	Priority 3 - Inclusion		<p>March 2025: In discussions with the Service Director for Education & SEND, it was agreed that this action was not able to be progressed during the duration of the previous delivery plan and has therefore continued into this delivery plan.</p> <p>July 2025: A meeting took place with Service Director – Education & SEND and representatives from The Castle School regarding SIS. Brookfields has not been part of SIS this year due to staffing issues, resulting in The Castle School running the service alone. A meeting is still pending with the Head of Brookfields to explore staffing contributions for next year. This will be followed up before the</p>

			Service Director - Education & SEND (WBC)			<p>end of term. Schools continue to express a preference for an expanded SIS service, allowing for more in-depth support and observation.</p> <p>August 2025: Brookfields have confirmed that they will re-join SISS from 1st April 2026. The service offer is currently being reviewed to ascertain whether it still meets needs.</p>
3.4.2	Review and develop Pupil Referral Unit outreach service, with identified funding and revised Service Level Agreement.	September 2026	Lead Action Owner: Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH (WBC)	Priority 3 - Inclusion		<p>March 2025: The PEP is in the process of developing an SLA with iCollege, within which the outreach service will be included. The OFSTED Thematic Review indicated confidence in the iCollege offer more generally.</p> <p>August 2025: iCollege has been highly praised by parents for its adaptability and responsiveness to emerging needs. Its service level agreement has become somewhat unclear, not due to leadership issues, but as a result of its flexible approach. Recent conversations highlight that iCollege has organically evolved into a unique and valued provision, including elements of resource-based unit work.</p>
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of schools accessing outreach support. Satisfaction with SISS (SURVEY) Satisfaction with PRU outreach service (SURVEY) Reduction in suspensions/ exclusions and increased attendance. 						
3.5	Support our Local Schools with the early identification of EBSA and a consistent implementation of provision.					
3.5.1	Establish a community of practice group to gain an understanding of how children and young people with EBSA are being supported locally and to disseminate good practice, ensuring there is a shared understanding across the local area.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Head of SEND (WBC)	Priority 3 - Inclusion		<p>March 2025: SENCO Conference in 2025 will focus on EBSA. Currently, only a small number of tickets have been sold and the event will not break even if there isn't more interest. It is hoped the conference will provide new ideas and perspectives. The Task Group felt that they could act as the Community of Practice Group, provided there was the right representation. This was further discussed in the Task Group held on 05/03 where the group defined the purpose of having a Community of Practice Group including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing best practice and strategies across schools and services Providing clear definitions of EBSA and distinguishing it from broader mental health or SEND issues Encouraging multi-agency collaboration, particularly with social care and health services Raising awareness of available local support and] Ensuring all agencies work towards a unified approach to supporting students <p>There is currently no EP in post with the capacity or special interest in EBSA. The EBSA team are currently receiving some additional support from the Emotional Health Academy.</p> <p>The Principal EP/Service Manager for SEMH is chairing the EBSA task group and will be taking this forward as a Community of Practice was fully defined.</p> <p>April 2025: A group of Primary Schools are looking at the training element which may inform the community of practice; combined with parent community and how we support them.</p> <p>August 2025: This group and the training group has a crossover of participants. These groups, and the conversations these groups are having will support development of a community of practice.</p>
3.5.2	Develop a programme of learning for our schools to ensure our	March 2026	Lead Action Owner:	Priority 3 - Inclusion		<p>March 2025: Funded training will be offered to schools as a pilot (small group of schools) for the whole school and families. Schools have been asked to submit a expression of interest.</p>

	workforce is confident in supporting children and young people with EBSA.		Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Head of SEND (WBC)			<p>Training Link: https://www.edpsyched.co.uk/ebsa-horizons-schools</p> <p>April 2025: 8 Primary Schools want to join the pilot there are a number of meetings across the year to be organised to support schools and monitor how the training is going. It is 12 hours of training accessible for the year and all online. It is tiered training e.g. office staff 45 mins. It is appropriate for role level within the school. It is whole school training, with all staff to be trained. Schools also have a family license to give access to resources for families.</p> <p>Secondary schools were offered the training too. We are hopeful two secondary schools will join the pilot. We are looking at purchasing as a pilot pack which will be offered at a discounted price for secondary schools. We are still to define which secondary schools will be joining the pilot. Having secondary schools on board will support next steps with working with secondary schools around EBSA.</p> <p>August 2025: The professions to undertake the Horizons EBSA training have now all been identified. There are 14 professions in total from teams across the Local Authority including the EBSA team, Educational Psychology, Youth Justice, Medical Tuition, Autism Team, Virtual School, Education Welfare. The PCF chair will also receive the training.</p> <p>The initial meeting with schools identified to undertake the training pilot took place in July. The next meeting is scheduled for November. Families of the schools who are completing the training will also have access to it – schools will release a link to parents with useful resources to support their child. We have 7 primary schools taking part, 1 secondary school and iCollege.</p>
3.5.3	Explore increasing capacity within the EBSA service to meet demand for earlier intervention.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Head of SEND (WBC)	Priority 3 - Inclusion		<p>March 2025: Schools have been surveyed around their experience of all SEMH services. There will be continuing work to measure service impact going forward. Many secondary schools were unsure whether they could access EBSA support, and OFSTED flagged this as an issue in the Thematic Review. There is an additional action within the delivery plan for 2025-2026 to explore secondary access to EBSA support to address this grow in demand.</p> <p>There are an increasing number of high-complexity cases, which EBSA services may not be able to fully support. There are lots of teams within West Berkshire Council who will be working with EBSA children and young people, so there is a requirement to understand how we might be able to use Capita ONE to record this information. Coding of Part-time Timetables might give us a better idea of numbers of children and young people experiencing EBSA.</p> <p>Schools have provided feedback that there is an overlap of support services, but that there is not joined up working – this will be looked at as part of the SEMH services review.</p> <p>Still working on increasing EP capacity across the board. EP element incorporated into funding.</p> <p>June 2025: Capacity remains an issue. Support is being provided by EHA. The funding is still available, but there is a requirement for a balance of experience. We do have a casual EP coming in who has experience in trauma, so we may be able to use some of their time.</p> <p>August 2025: The anticipated appointment of a casual EP with trauma experience has not progressed. The EBSA Coordinator continues to be supported by EHA.</p>
3.5.4	Review, and re-launch, our EBSA guidance. To achieve this, we will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop updated guidance for schools Create accessible guidance 	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH (WBC)	Priority 3 - Inclusion		<p>March 2025: Currently there is ongoing development work to create a page on EBSA for the Local Offer. The EBSA Task Group held on 05/03 agreed that the guidance would need to be updated after the EBSA Horizons training has been implemented, as this will inform best practices going forward. It was suggested that schools who undergo the training could be involved in shaping the revised guidance going forward.</p>

	for parent/carers – this could be in the form of a parent/carer booklet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an Early Identification Toolkit • Ensure all resources are available on the Local Offer for easy access 		Action Contributor(s): Head of SEND (WBC) / West Berkshire Parent/Carer Forum		<p>April 2025: Although guidance is dated 2020, does incorporate what is happening locally to support young people with EBSA. Is important to review regularly and would like to incorporate information from the training. Guidance refresh to be coproduced and include language which is useful. Latest research, webinars etc. will need to be incorporated into refresh.</p> <p>June 2025: Updated action to include early identification toolkit. Discussed in the EBSA Task Group on 04/06 that it might be useful to ensure EBSA is identified at the earliest opportunity. The Task & Finish group will convene for the first time in September 2025, volunteers for the task group have been identified.</p> <p>August 2025: The first EBSA Early Identification toolkit meeting is due to take place on Thursday 18th September 2025 and will be attended by colleagues from across the Local Authority, schools and the West Berkshire Parent/Carer Forum.</p>
3.5.5	Develop Secondary School access to support children presenting with EBSA to address a growth in demand	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Head of SEND (WBC)	Priority 3 - Inclusion	<p>April 2025: Initially we need to understand from schools what interventions look like from a school perspective, including data and determine if there is another approach for secondary schools which needs to be explored.</p> <p>We need to ensure secondary school representation on the EBSA task Group. Some work had previously been done around secondary school support for EBSA, which the SEND Strategy Officer will investigate.</p> <p>June 2025: One secondary school taking part in training, but more work to be done here. EBSA Task Group on 04/06 heard that secondary schools have their own Alternative Provision/Inclusion Units which they are using to support EBSA type learners. Most secondary schools also have their own Medical Tuition teams, or staff, who are visiting these young people at home e.g. for academic tutoring. Secondary schools are adapting and changing as they are coming up with different things to meet the individual needs of learners.</p> <p>August 2025: Work is underway to develop updated information on EBSA for inclusion on the Local Offer. Currently, the only publicly accessible content is located on an outdated SLA page. The revised Local Offer pages will feature the Annual Report and a range of resources designed for use in schools, ensuring more accurate, accessible, and up-to-date information for families and professionals.</p>
3.5.6	Identify children who experience persistent difficulty attending school; working with partners including Health to ensure timely sharing of information to improve outcomes of these children.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Principal EWO & Lead Officer for Safeguarding and Acting Service Manager – Access, Vulnerable Learners & Families (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Head of SEND (WBC) / Designated Clinical Officer	Priority 3 - Inclusion	<p>April 2025: We need a better understanding of who the children are and where they are. Feeding back through both primary and secondary schools. Overlap of how children are being supported. In SEMH services, developing a single referral form which may support with data gathering i.e. a way of identifying EBSA at earlier levels.</p> <p>June 2025: The EBSA Task Group on 04/06 heard that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4943 persistently absent learners - 665 children severely absent (<50%) - West Berkshire is in line with national average - Biggest numbers of persistently absent learners have SEMH needs and/or an Autism diagnosis - Learners with an EHCP are also in the higher absence bracket - Numbers of EBSA may be higher as the above data doesn't capture pupils on a part-time timetable who are making small steps to return to school <p>Education attendance officers have been offering a lot of training and drop-in sessions to schools. Low attendance can be one of the first signs of EBSA.</p> <p>EBSA Coordinator is meeting with a Clinical Psychologist who is supporting families with parental</p>

			(BOB ICB) / Social Care (WBC)			<p>mental health. They are looking at how parental mental health may be causing EBSA, whereas the LA look at how EBSA may be causing parental mental health.</p> <p>August 2025:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The development of an LA Attendance Strategy is underway with the aim to have this shared with Corporate Board by September 2025 and published following this.• The attendance data across West Berkshire and statistical neighbours for the academic year 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 reveals consistent patterns that reinforce the need for a collaborative and proactive attendance strategy. West Berkshire maintains a strong attendance rate of 94.82% in 2024/2025, slightly above the national average of 94%. However, persistent absence remains a concern across all areas with West Berkshire at 12.65%, closely aligned with statistical neighbours. These figures suggest that while overall attendance is relatively stable, a significant proportion of pupils are missing substantial amounts of school.• Unauthorised absence rates have also seen a slight increase across the board, with West Berkshire rising from 1.05% to 1.2%, mirroring national and regional trends.• Work continues on our offer for S19 pupils and graduated offer for pupils with medical conditions that cannot attend school (see action 4.4.1).• Continued work with schools through Attendance Team to address absence at the earliest opportunity – a comprehensive training offer is in place for the academic year 2025/2026.• Data led targeted support work for schools with our lowest attendance % has shown improved rates of attendance and this best practice will continue into 2025/2026• The SEND Team and Attendance Team are working much closer together – sharing data, support, and plans for improved attendance.• Proactive school support and visits to any schools of concern to ensure action plans are in place for improvement – this will be extended to the Commissioning Team once they are in post.• Ordinarily Available and SEND Banding review work will contribute to this action.• Principal EWO & Lead Officer for Safeguarding and Acting Service Manager – Access, Vulnerable Learners & Families is the lead for Priority 4 with BWSCP on children not in school• Principal EWO & Lead Officer for Safeguarding and Acting Service Manager – Access, Vulnerable Learners & Families is the lead for Priority 4 with BWSCP on children not in school is leading a multi-authority project with BOB to support GPs and front-line health staff to support school attendance.
<p>Measures of success (how will we know?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduction in number of pupils absent from school due to EBSA.						
<p>Priority 4: Developing Local Specialist Provision & Support</p>						
No.	Task & Actions	Timeline	Owner	Governance 1 April 2025- 31 March 2026	RAG Status*	Commentary
4.1	Identify the current, and future, needs of children and young people with SEND to ensure their needs can be met locally.					

4.1.1	Understand better the needs of the current and future cohorts of children with SEND to ensure the availability of the type of education provisions required to meet need, refreshing the SEND Sufficiency Plan annually and publishing by September each year.	September 2025	Lead Action Owner: Interim Education Development Officer – SEND Projects (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Head of SEND / SEND Strategy Officer (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP): Sufficiency Strategy Task and Finish Group		<p>July 2025: It was agreed within the Internal Data Task Group that responsibility for the annual update of the SEND Sufficiency Plan would sit with the Interim Education Development Officer – SEND Project Developments, given their involvement in analysing data related to short-, medium-, and long-term provision needs. However, since this agreement, there has been a change in personnel. The current priority is to provide an update to the Executive outlining our plans for developing sufficient local specialist provision.</p> <p>August 2025: Work to better understand the needs of the current and future cohorts of children with SEND is progressing well (see SEND Sufficiency update report for 19 June Exec Briefing) and is feeding into the identification of solutions to increase local specialist placement capacity.</p>
4.1.2	Undertake a banding review of unit costs of mainstream, maintained special and alternative provision to ensure parity and alignment with local and national funding arrangements	December 2025	Lead Action Owner: SEND Re-banding Review Lead (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		<p><u>Fair and Transparent Funding Model – Mainstream Schools</u></p> <p>March 2025: The Working Group has met monthly from November and is due to meet again on 10th February. The SEND Re-banding Review Lead has amended the preferred LA example framework to reflect West Berks context and in line with feedback. The working group has tested some EHCPs from the representative schools against these. Some further suggested amendments have been made. Group is reviewing the draft mainstream school SEND Funding Guidance and providing feedback. Helen has met with DCO to support health engagement. SEND school mapping data requested is developing well and will be shared with group in Feb and March meetings. Agreed Helen will lead OAP Working Group. Members of current funding working group can become involved in the OAP working group. An Early Support Funding Framework has been drafted for consideration by the group. Going forward the following work is still to be completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further amend draft Framework to reflect feedback to date and West Berks needs. <u>Completed</u> • Meeting with EHCP team to engage with them and get their feedback and suggestions. <u>Complete and ongoing</u> • Test with larger sample of EHCPs (Feb / March) – <u>as above, larger sample being tested</u> • Amend Mainstream School SEND Funding Guide to reflect feedback to date. <u>Complete for sending out September 2025</u> • Meeting with secondary SEND leads 10th Feb and SENDCo network (5th March) to get feedback and suggestions. <u>Complete</u> • Engage with broader health partners (Helen) <u>Have tried</u> • Develop Early Support Funding model / framework for development Feb / March. <u>Vanessa leading. Aim to launch November 2025</u> <p>There are concerns with regards to the capacity of services to be actively involved in the work. Services are doing their best to attend and be involved.</p> <p>August 2025: In the working group, schools have tested descriptors on pupils in their schools and their feedback is that they seem to work. There is recognition that they do not match the current system which is not transparent or consistent. The SEND Re-banding Review Lead is working with the SEND team to test a larger sample of EHCPs against the descriptors to inform budget modelling. (Sessions are scheduled in June, July and August and the team are also moderating a larger sample). The SEND Re-banding Review Lead is working with schools' finance, to model and apply funding methodology.</p> <p><u>Fair and Transparent Funding Model – Specialist Schools and specialist provisions in mainstream</u></p>

					<p>March 2025: Draft descriptors Have been put together for SEMH provisions (iCollege EHCPs and Castle @ Theale) and for Brookfields and Castle. These were tested on 27th January in moderation sessions with special schools. The feedback was that with some minor amendments the descriptors clearly described children and young people in their cohorts and there was consistency of judgement across schools and within schools. Planned activity going forward includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helen is making the proposed amendments. The schools are allocating an indicative descriptor for all their pupils against the framework. An all-day moderation session (SEMH in the morning and Brookfields and The Castle in the afternoon) will take place on 10th March. <p>August 2025: Special schools have asked for one descriptor to be split and for average class sizes and ratios to be added into support sections.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The SEND Re-banding Review Lead to contact finance team to ensure they are ready for financial modelling actions. <p>Special schools have shared issues with place planning and not receiving 3.4% uplift. This has been raised at director level and with school finance. Schools have received this in previous years according to school finance. We need to make this clear in indicative budget share. The SEND Re-banding Review Lead will build into implementation elements of new framework. The aim is to complete Dec 2025 to inform budgets 2026/2027</p> <p>Visits have been made to all mainstream schools with SRPs and DUs. Special school draft descriptors have been shared with DU schools for their review. Descriptors being drafted in July/ Aug 2025 and shared and developed with other schools September /October 2025. Aim to complete Dec 2025 to inform budgets for 2026/2027</p> <p>Some risks have been identified including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion held on current cohorts and particularly pupils who should be able to have their needs met in a specialist provision in a mainstream school or a mainstream school. This impacts on the staffing structures and the breadth of curriculum in a special school / AP setting. The impact is that there are not sufficient places available for those children and young people who really need a special school setting and so they are in mainstream schools. This then impacts on mainstream schools.• iCollege also needs this clarity regarding placement of pupils with an EHCP and process for this. <p>Suggested mitigations are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• This work needs to lead to clear guidance to support admissions into special school / specialist provision placements. Some other LAs also have videos to support clarity for parents / carers and mainstream schools. The special schools welcome this. This action is in the delivery plan.• For iCollege this should be picked up in the discussions with them to develop an SLA.
4.1.3	Review and updating of Strategic and Operational commissioning and procurement practices in relation to placement and Alternative Provision - including brokerage and contract management	December 2025	Lead Action Owner: Commissioning Team (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)	<p>March 2025: A review has been completed with the outcome of the review being to re-design and re-resource commissioning arrangements across Children's Services to ensure appropriate cost-effective provision is available locally and that contracts are monitored more closely to ensure value for money.</p> <p>April 2025: The commissioning team roles have been approved by FRP on a two-year fixed term basis initially and are out advertisement.</p> <p>August 2025: The structure of the new Commissioning Team is as follows:</p>

						<p>The following posts have been offered and are proceeding through the onboarding process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Lead • Contracts Officer • Quality Assurance Lead • Senior Brokerage Officer • Brokerage Officer <p>The following roles remain out for recruitment/have interviews scheduled:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint Commissioner • Market Development Manager • 1x Brokerage Officer
4.1.4	Consider bringing the commissioning functions together for SEND to support a shared and accurate picture of local need informed by joint data sets developed through the SEND Dashboard that further informs commissioning and monitoring of impact of services as well as opportunities for joint commissioning.	December 2025	Lead Action Owner: Commissioning Team (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		<p>April 2025: The commissioning team roles have been approved by FRP on a two-year fixed term basis initially and are out advertisement.</p> <p>August 2025: See update to action 4.1.3 regarding the Commissioning Team recruitment.</p>

4.1.5	Review decision making processes to ensure transparency, consistency, and value for money. Decision making processes to be updated, where necessary, on the Local Offer.	September 2025	Lead Action Owner: Head of SEND (WBC) Action Contributor(s): SEND Re-banding Review Lead (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		March 2025: A review of decision-making processes was completed in August 2024 and a report was shared with DMT. This work is now dependent on the outcome of the SEND Banding Review August 2025: Progress on this action is dependent on the full completion of the SEND re-banding review.
4.1.6	Link the work being undertaken to analyse independent and non-maintained specialist placements with the Banding Review work: Need to understand the data in terms of the Phase 2 banding review working group	August – September 2025	Lead Action Owner: Head of SEND (WBC) Action Contributor(s): SEND Re-banding Review Lead (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		August 2025: This action is dependent on the appointment of a Head of SEND, a post which is not yet filled. The action will remain on hold until such time a Head of SEND is in post.
4.1.7	Work in partnership with the Parent//Carer Forum to ensure that the experiences and insights of parents and carers are central to co-production and identifying the current and future needs of children and young people with SEND. This will involve regular discussions, feedback opportunities and joint planning to develop services that are closely aligned with the needs of local families.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Head of SEND (WBC) Action Contributor(s): SEND Strategy Officer / Interim Head of Early Years and Participation & Engagement (WBC) / West Berkshire Parent/Carer Forum	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		August 2025: This action is dependent on the appointment of a Head of SEND, a post which is not yet filled. The action will remain on hold until such time a Head of SEND is in post. However, the chair of our West Berkshire Parent/Carer Forum does attend our Priority 4 – Developing Local Specialist Provision & Support group, where sufficiency of specialist provision is discussed.
4.1.8	Develop, and publish, a clear and accessible Continuum of Provision guide on the Local Offer. This guide will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support parents/carers in understanding the range of SEND Provision available across West Berkshire, including types of settings, how placement panel's operate and how & when school visits can be arranged. Improve families' confidence and clarity when considering educational options, leading 	September 2025	Lead Action Owner: Head of SEND (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Interim Principal SEN Manager / Learning Support Services Manager (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		April 2025: New action added April 2025. A discussion was had about ensuring that there is consistency and clear information for parents/carers, in one place, to support them when providing their school preference(s) for their child with an EHCP. Feedback from parents has been that they don't know how to choose or school, or what is available. It was agreed that the first steps of this action would be to research what information is currently available on the Local Offer and understand from parents how this information could be presented to be most useful to them, given concerns around duplication of information and required resources to keep such a continuum of provision document up to date. August 2025: There are no further updates at this stage, as the Parent Carer Forum continues to gather feedback from families on how best to present information to support parents and carers of children and young people with SEND when choosing a school. This work is closely aligned with ongoing efforts to improve the accessibility and usability of the Local Offer, ensuring that key information is easy to find and understand.

	to more informed and timely decisions around school placements. • Be reviewed annually.					
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment of unit costs with statistical neighbours and national benchmarking • Reduction in requests for EHC Needs Assessments. • Clear and transparent decision-making processes published on the Local Offer. • Reduction in unit costs for placements in IMNS and AP. • Reduction in price increase in current high-cost placements in IMNS and AP. • Increase in sustainable AP provision. • % of children placed in good, or outstanding provision 						
4.2	Work with our local mainstream provision to identify opportunities to develop additional SEMH, Autism, MLD and SLD provision.					
4.2.1	Develop a district wide plan for expanding specialist resource provision, or units, in mainstream settings. This will be informed by the sufficiency plan data and emerging patterns of need, with a focus on ensuring there is a continuum of provision across all phases.	September 2025	Lead Action Owner: Interim Education Development Officer – SEND Projects (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Head of SEND / Education Place Planning & Development Manager / SEND Strategy Officer (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		May 2025: Proposed new action developed in response to feedback requesting a reduction in duplicated actions, with a focus on broader, data-led priorities aligned with sufficiency plan, rather than overly specific tasks. July 2025: The Interim Education Development Officer – SEND Projects is currently working on providing an update on our plans to the Executive. August 2025: See update to action 4.1.1 where the Executive Briefing is embedded.
4.2.2	Engage with schools, and other stakeholders, to explore and co-produce models of inclusive provision that respond to identified gaps.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Interim Education Development Officer – SEND Projects (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Head of SEND / Education Place Planning & Development Manager / SEND Strategy Officer (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		May 2025: Proposed new action developed in response to feedback requesting a reduction in duplicated actions, with a focus on broader, data-led priorities aligned with sufficiency plan, rather than overly specific tasks. August 2025: See update to action 4.2.1.
4.2.4	Work with our Resource Provisions to review, and amend, their admissions criteria, supporting	April 2025	Lead Action Owner: SEND Re-	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local		March 2025: A desktop analysis of current SLAs for West Berkshire's Resource Bases and Units has been completed. A meeting is scheduled for 27/03 to discuss the findings of this desktop analysis. Discussions were had in the Creation of Specialist Placements meeting around

	them to meet the needs of more complex children.		banding Review Lead (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Learning Support Services Manager / Interim Principal SEN Manager / SEND Strategy Officer (WBC)	Specialist Provision (including AP)		standardising the SLAs and thinking about how this needs to tie into the banding review work. The SEND Re-banding Review Lead, Learning Support Services Manager & Interim Principal SEN Manager will be visiting the resource provisions/units in the coming weeks to start looking at description of need as part of the banding review work. August 2025: See update to enabler 7.11.
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of available local specialist placements in mainstream provision Reduction in INMSS use and spend 						
4.3	Work with our local maintained special schools to identify opportunities for expansion and exploring with partners opportunities for additional specialist provision.					
4.3.1	Build additional classrooms at The Castle School to create additional places by April 2026	April 2026	Lead Action Owner: Education Place Planning & Development Manager (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Interim Principal SEN Manager (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		April 2025: This is a four classroom newbuild which will be able to accommodate an additional 32 pupils. It is due for practical completion in December 2025. The additional classrooms are due to open in January 2026 to allow the schools to set up the classrooms, ensuring appropriate teaching and support staff are in place. August 2025: This project remains on track to achieve practical completion in December 2025.
4.3.2	Determine whether the long-term need for special school places for children with learning difficulties can be met through expansion of existing local special schools or whether an additional special school needs to be developed, in partnership with neighbouring Local Authorities.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Education Place Planning & Development Manager (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Head of SEND / Commissioning Team (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		August 2025: Initial work indicates that it's likely that the increased local specialist placement capacity can be achieved without the need for an additional special school. However, the work to increase local specialist placement capacity is still ongoing and forecast demand is to be reviewed annually, both of which may change this initial view.
4.3.3	Work collaboratively with a range of providers (e.g. maintained, non-maintained, Academy, INMSS) to identify cost-effective and sustainable solutions to increasing local capacity, including through partnership working and commissioning approaches.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Commissioning Team (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Education Place	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		May 2025: Proposed new action developed in response to feedback requesting a reduction in duplicated actions, with a focus on broader, data-led priorities aligned with sufficiency plan, rather than overly specific tasks. August 2025: There are no further updates at this stage. Progress on this action is contingent upon the Commissioning Team being in post. For the latest update on recruitment, please refer to action 4.1.3.

			Planning & Development Manager / Head of SEND (WBC)			
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of specialist local provision places Reduction in INMSS use and spend 						
4.4	Develop bespoke packages of support for children and young people who are not attending school for health or other reasons.					
4.4.1	Review Local Authority policy on education of children not attending school for health or other reasons (S19)	October 2025	Lead Action Owner: Principal EWO & Safeguarding Lead and Acting Service Manager Vulnerable Learners & Families (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH (WBC)	Priority 4: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		March 2025: A review of Local Authority Policy on education of children not attending school for health or other reasons (s19) was completed and presented at DMT in July 2024 but there was some delay in awaiting next steps, therefore this action is marked as delayed. Work around the thematic review/visit focussed on children not in school. Learning from the review will inform work in this area moving forward. August 2025: Suggested policy for S19, medical needs and proposed solutions was put forward to DMT in July 2024. Awaiting further direction. There have also been some discussions around how the new Commissioning Team can support this work as well as considering a fixed location for medical support.
4.4.2	Determine what additional resources are needed to ensure that the duty to make suitable provision for children not attending school for health or other reasons is fully met	December 2025	Lead Action Owner: Principal EWO & Safeguarding Lead and Acting Service Manager Vulnerable Learners & Families (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH (WBC)	Priority 4: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		March 2025: See update to action 4.4.1 above. This action is dependent on outcome of this action and a decision on additional actions following the thematic review/visit. August 2025: No change, see update to action 4.4.1.
4.4.3	Ensure that there is the capacity to create and monitor bespoke educational packages for children who are not attending school (including through the use of personal budgets)	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Commissioning Team (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Principal EWO & Safeguarding Lead and Acting	Priority 4: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		April 2025: Through the budget process, we have secured the capacity to manage Personal Budgets, which we didn't have previously. August 2025: We have an overwhelming need to secure appropriate S19 provision (see update to action 4.4.1), policies and capacity. We currently 'manage' this through the Medical Tuition Service (MTS) which is reliant on one person, and it is ever growing – S19 for those not able to secure places at SEN specialist provision, medical, vulnerable, EBSA, EOTAS etc. The LA faces significant challenges e.g. a suitable education package cannot be provided if the most appropriate provision is a SEN specialist provision – see updates on sufficiency of specialist

			Service Manager Vulnerable Learners & Families / Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH (WBC)			<p>placements.</p> <p>There has been lots of discussion and attempts to develop an SLA for iCollege to ensure that our Alternative Provision (AP) is appropriate, however we are reliant on commissioning/finance to oversee this. We require:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Quality Assured list of AP in the area • A way of identifying who is on AP and for this to be monitored • An AP policy to support who is eligible • Appropriate pathways decision for pupils who have not secured SEN placements or are tribunal directed • EOTAS to be identified and the SEN team responsible • AP planning work with schools as they develop their own AP <p>Consideration will also be given to the appropriateness of including personal budgets within this action.</p>
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in Complaints (Stage 1 and Stage 2) & Local Government Ombudsman cases • Reduction of cases in which children are not in receipt of education (S19), and a reduction in the time that they are out of education 						
4.5	Work with stakeholders to develop an enhanced short break offer to better meet the needs of children and young people with SEND and their families, locally.					
4.5.1	Use data analysis to review the availability and take-up of local short break provision, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of demand. This will inform the needs analysis and short breaks procurement strategy and support the competitive tender process to commission provision that effectively meets the needs of children and young people with SEND across the Local Area.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Commissioning Team (WBC) Action Contributor(s): SEND Strategy Officer / Interim Head of Early Years & Participation and Engagement (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		<p>April 2025: SEND Strategy Officer and Interim Head of Early Years and Participation & Engagement are undertaking visits to Short Breaks providers to support with monitoring of what is currently being delivered and identifying areas where there is the need to develop the Short Breaks Offer. This will be analysed alongside a recent parent/carers feedback survey and handed over to the Commissioning Team when they are in post.</p> <p>August 2025: To date, three visits to short breaks providers have been completed, with two additional visits to be scheduled. The data and insights gathered from these visits will be analysed and shared at the next Short Breaks Task Group meeting (September). This information will also be provided to the Commissioning Team, once in post, to support the initiation of a competitive tender process.</p>
4.5.2	Collaborate with local providers to identify and address gaps in short break provision, such as after school and holiday club services in the East of the authority, post-16 short breaks and short breaks for children with complex health needs. As part of this process, use data analysis to inform a competitive tender process, ensuring that services are developed to meet these specific	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Commissioning Team (WBC) Action Contributor(s): SEND Strategy Officer / Interim Head of Early Years & Participation and	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		August 2025: See update to action 4.5.1.

	needs and are accessible across the Local Area.		Engagement (WBC)			
4.5.3	Explore the opportunity to expand access to provision following outcome of Parent Carer Needs Assessments (PCNA) improving access to provision ensuring it is inclusive and responsive to diverse family needs.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Commissioning Team (WBC) Action Contributor(s): SEND Strategy Officer / Interim Head of Early Years & Participation and Engagement / Principal Social Worker & Academy Lead (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		August 2025: It is expected that this will fall within the scope of the Commissioning Team's work as part of the competitive tender process for short break provision. There is interest in expanding this provision, subject to provider capacity and available funding. However, progress on this action is dependent on the Commissioning Team being in post and the commencement of the tendering process.
4.5.4	Explore opportunities for collaboration with neighbouring Local Authorities to expand access to short break provision, enabling families to access support which might be geographically closer to them, even if this falls outside of Local Authority boundary. This will include mapping existing provision, identifying potential partnership opportunities and developing agreements to improve choice and accessibility for families.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Commissioning Team Action Contributor(s): SEND Strategy Officer (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		July 2025: While progressing this action will ultimately require capacity within the Commissioning Team, the SEND Strategy Officer has proactively initiated contact with Reading to begin early discussions. A response from Reading is currently awaited. August 2025: The SEND Strategy Officer and Interim Head of Early Years have an initial discussion with Reading scheduled for 28 th August 2025.
4.5.5	Through co-production with the Parent/Carer Forum ensure that information about Short Breaks is clear, accessible, and transparent on the Local Offer. This will include developing a 'One Page Service Offer' (previously known as plan on a page) that clearly sets out the 'Universal', 'Supported' and 'Specialist' short break provision available, along with eligibility criteria, to help families understand and access the support they need.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: SEND Strategy Officer (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Interim Head of Early Years & Participation and Engagement (WBC) / West Berkshire Parent/Carer Forum	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		August 2025: This work is beginning with a co-production session to update the Short Breaks Statement for 2025. It is anticipated that, following this session and the completion of the remaining provider visits, the Parent Carer Forum (PCF) will have the necessary information to develop a One Page Service Offer for Short Breaks. This will also contribute to ongoing development of the Local Offer and will need to be regularly reviewed in light of the forthcoming competitive tender process for short break provision.
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased offer for assessed and non-assessed short breaks, including in the East Satisfaction rates (SURVEY). 						

Priority 5: Strengthening Alternative Provision						
No.	Task & Actions	Timeline	Owner	Governance 1 April 2025- 31 March 2026	RAG Status*	Commentary
5.1	Undertake a needs analysis to ensure that we understand demand and can meet need.					
5.1.1	Develop and implement an Alternative Provision Strategy for West Berkshire, which is informed by the annual refresh of the SEND Sufficiency Plan. The Alternative Provision Strategy will be co-produced with schools, children and young people and their families, to ensure it effectively meets local demand and addresses the needs of those requiring Alternative Provision.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Commissioning Team (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Principal EWO and Safeguarding Lead & Acting Service Manager Vulnerable Learners & Families / Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		April 2025: There is a requirement to first understand the data, before the strategy can be written. August 2025: There are no further updates at this stage. Progress on this action is contingent upon the Commissioning Team being in post. For the latest update on recruitment, please refer to action 4.1.3.
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of Alternative Provision placements available within the district Reduction in out of area placements Improved attendance, engagement and outcomes Earlier identification of emerging needs 						
5.2	Deliver high quality Alternative Provision locally operating alongside mainstream and special schools to meet the needs of our learners for some, or all, of their education.					
5.2.1	Work with the market to develop a range of alternative provision available in West Berkshire to meet individualised needs of our children and young people	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Commissioning Team (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		April 2025: Require commissioning team to be in post. Agreement at FRP to recruit on an initial 2-year fixed term basis. The roles are currently being advertised. August 2025: There are no further updates at this stage. Progress on this action is contingent upon the Commissioning Team being in post. For the latest update on recruitment, please refer to action 4.1.3.
5.2.2	Develop guidance for schools on commissioning and monitoring the enhanced alternative provision offer	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Commissioning Team (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		April 2025: Require commissioning team to be in post. Agreement at FRP to recruit on an initial 2-year fixed term basis. The roles are currently being advertised. August 2025: There are no further updates at this stage. Progress on this action is contingent upon the Commissioning Team being in post. For the latest update on recruitment, please refer to action 4.1.3.

5.2.3	Establish commissioning and quality assurance processes in relation to alternative provision	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Commissioning Team (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		<p>April 2025: Require commissioning team to be in post. Agreement at FRP to recruit on an initial 2-year fixed term basis. The roles are currently being advertised.</p> <p>August 2025: There are no further updates at this stage. Progress on this action is contingent upon the Commissioning Team being in post. For the latest update on recruitment, please refer to action 4.1.3.</p>
5.2.4	Create and embed the AP directory into the Local Offer website	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Commissioning Team (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Specialist Information Officer EYs & Local Offer (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		<p>April 2025: Require commissioning team to be in post. Agreement at FRP to recruit on an initial 2-year fixed term basis. The roles are currently being advertised.</p> <p>August 2025: There are no further updates at this stage. Progress on this action is contingent upon the Commissioning Team being in post. For the latest update on recruitment, please refer to action 4.1.3.</p>
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased AP offer Fewer mainstream placement breakdowns Reduced INMSS Reduction in second chance mainstream placements and AP and specialist placements, from mainstream Regular QA reports provided 						
5.3	Further develop short- and medium-term alternative provision to enable students to re-engage with education and return to mainstream schools (iCollege).					
5.3.1	Develop additional KS3 capacity for medium term in-reach turnaround placements.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Commissioning Team (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		<p>April 2025: Require commissioning team to be in post. Agreement at FRP to recruit on an initial 2-year fixed term basis. The roles are currently being advertised.</p> <p>August 2025: There are no further updates at this stage. Progress on this action is contingent upon the Commissioning Team being in post. For the latest update on recruitment, please refer to action 4.1.3.</p>
5.3.2	Explore the development of additional full-time OFSTED registered Alternative Provision to address gaps in provision, including for children in Early Years. This will focus on developing options that support pupils with re-engaging with education and successfully transitioning back into mainstream schools or colleges (where	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Commissioning Team (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		<p>April 2025: Require commissioning team to be in post. Agreement at FRP to recruit on an initial 2-year fixed term basis. The roles are currently being advertised.</p> <p>August 2025: There are no further updates at this stage. Progress on this action is contingent upon the Commissioning Team being in post. For the latest update on recruitment, please refer to action 4.1.3.</p>

	appropriate), ensuring a continuum of provision for all age groups.					
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of AP places at iCollege • Increased AP placements from other providers • Reduction in INMSS • Reduction in exclusions and managed moves • Overall increased attendance data 						
5.4	Develop short- and medium-term emergency alternative provision for children and young people who have no educational setting.					
5.4.1	Ensure that there are short term education placements available for children with high level needs moving into the area (for example Children in Care returning to or placed in West Berkshire; Pupils with a special school named on their EHCP who have recently moved into area), or at risk of PEX from specialist placement, whilst alternative permanent placements are identified.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Commissioning Team (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Head of SEND / Principal EWO and Safeguarding Lead & Acting Service Manager Vulnerable Learners & Families / Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		April 2025: Require commissioning team to be in post. Agreement at FRP to recruit on an initial 2-year fixed term basis. The roles are currently being advertised. August 2025: There are no further updates at this stage. Progress on this action is contingent upon the Commissioning Team being in post. For the latest update on recruitment, please refer to action 4.1.3.
5.4.2	Work with schools and iCollege to ensure that referral information to iCollege provides SEND information, and that children and young people are correctly coded on census returns. This will help inform support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at referral information to ensure children and young people are coded as SEN Support or EHCP • Look at referral information to iCollege to ensure it captures need and thus ensures accurate recording 	December 2025	Lead Action Owner: Commissioning Team (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision (including AP)		April 2025: Require commissioning team to be in post. Agreement at FRP to recruit on an initial 2-year fixed term basis. The roles are currently being advertised. August 2025: There are no further updates at this stage. Progress on this action is contingent upon the Commissioning Team being in post. For the latest update on recruitment, please refer to action 4.1.3.
5.4.3	Work with schools to review, and refine, coding practices for Permanent and Fixed-term exclusions to ensure the information received accurately	July 2025	Lead Action Owner: Principal EP & Service Manager SEMH (WBC)	Priority's 4 & 5: Developing Local Specialist Provision		August 2025: This work is aligned with action 3.2.1.

	reflects level of need. This will include ensuring that 'incidents' are appropriately categorised enabling a clearer understanding of reasons for exclusions; informing the development of targeted emergency Alternative Provision.		Action Contributor(s): SEN & DCT Business Manager / Head of SEND (WBC)	(including AP)		
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in numbers of children without a school place (target 0) Reduction in time out of school placement 						
Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood						
No.	Task & Actions	Timeline	Owner	Governance 1 April 2025- 31 March 2026	RAG Status*	Commentary
6.1	Improve access to high quality information regarding preparation for adulthood for young people with SEND and their families.					
6.1.1	Through co-production with the Parent Carer Forum and Parent Champions, plan and deliver transition themed workshops for young people with SEND and their families.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Interim Head of Early Years and Participation & Engagement (WBC) Action Contributor(s): West Berkshire Parent Carer Forum / Parent Champions	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		June 2025: Last year, the Supported Internship event at Newbury College saw around 80 attendees, including young people. The event was a great success. We will be exploring additional workshops focussed on transitions with the Parent/Carer Forum and Parent Champions. August 2025: The West Berkshire Parent/Carer Forum have been introduced to the CEO at Ways into Work. They are looking to co-produce an information event for the academic year 2025-2026. An initial meeting is due to be scheduled in September 2025.
6.1.2	Review and improve the Preparation for Adulthood content of the SEND Local Offer website.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: SEND Strategy Officer (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Interim Head of Early Years and Participation & Engagement / Specialist Information Officer EYs &	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		June 2025: The Local Offer is undergoing improvements, but there is further development work required. August 2025: See update to enabler 7.13 which details plans for Local Offer developments. The lack of a SEND Youth Forum/youth voice is posing a concern regarding progression of this action.

			Local Offer (WBC) / West Berkshire Parent/Carer Forum			
6.1.3	Through co-production with young people with SEND, develop, and share, information on Preparation for Adulthood in a way that is accessible, meaningful and youth friendly. This will include involving young people in the creation of resources and developing effective ways of sharing this information with them.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: TBC Action Contributor(s): TBC	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		<p>March 2025: Discussion in PfA group that this work should be done with mainstream SEND pupils, given the work local specialist schools already complete with their pupils. Also discussed not 're-inventing- the wheel and making use of PfA resources design by NDTi.</p> <p>August 2025: The Participation Team has been agreed, and recruitment is underway for an additional 1-person to build on children in care participation and there will not be the capacity in the SEND space. The current team does not currently have the capacity or the necessary expertise to undertake SEND-related work. However, ongoing discussions between Education and Children's Social Care will explore how this could be made possible should appropriate resources become available.</p>
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased hits on P4A page of local offer Increased satisfaction (Survey) Reduction in NEET 						
6.2	Increase opportunities for young people with SEND to secure employment, including the development of Supported Internships and Apprenticeships.					
6.2.1	Develop a structured menu of work-related opportunities for young people with SEND, offering a range of experiences from short virtual interactions (e.g. a 1-hour career insight call) to extended placements such as T-Level industry placements. This will ensure varied levels of engagement to suit different needs and aspirations.	September 2025	Lead Action Owner: Deputy Headteacher Castle School Action Contributor(s): Managing Director Ways into Work / HR (WBC)	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		August 2025: The Careers and Enterprise Company is developing a strategy which is a structured approach that provides young people with different levels of work experience throughout their educational journey. If schools can connect and integrate into this framework, it will be highly beneficial. Although currently in its pilot phase, the strategy is set to be implemented. We need to ensure any structured menu of work-related opportunity we develop links into this work.
6.2.2	Implement work-related learning menu, embedding options across the organisation, and establish a process to monitor and evaluate its impact on increasing access to work-related learning activity within West Berkshire Council for young people with SEND.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: HR (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Deputy Headteacher	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		<p>March 2025: PfA group discussed the need to be mindful about having an effective monitoring process.</p> <p>August 2025: This action cannot be progressed until the structured menu of work-related opportunities has been developed.</p>

			Castle School / Managing Director Ways into Work			
6.2.3	Work in partnership with 'Ways into Work' to offer supported internship placements at the Council	September 2026	Lead Action Owner: SEND Strategy Officer (WBC) Action Contributor(s): HR (WBC) / Managing Director Ways into Work	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		<p>June 2025: Corporate Board paper was written in April 2025. Some changes have occurred since, and the report has been redrafted and sent for a slot at DMT prior to the report being head at Corporate Board.</p> <p>July 2025: Corporate Board paper is being presented at the board on Tuesday 5th August 2025.</p> <p>August 2025: The Corporate Board has approved the Council's initiative to become an employer offering Supported Internship placements. Following this endorsement, the SEND Strategy Officer has been tasked with preparing a presentation to share with the wider Senior Leadership Team (SLT), which is scheduled for September.</p> <p>The proposed approach involves individual service areas expressing interest in hosting a Supported Internship placement. Once identified, Ways into Work will collaborate closely with HR and the relevant service to 'job carve' a suitable role. The roles will be advertised in January, with assessments and interviews taking place in April and May. The aim is for placements to commence in September 2026.</p>
6.2.4	Once work-related learning opportunities and Supported Internships are embedded within the organisation, explore the opportunity for the Council to become a Level 3 Disability Confident Employer, taking into account the requirement for external assessment.	Longer term – 2027 / 2028	Lead Action Owner: HR (WBC) Action Contributor(s): SEND Strategy Officer (WBC)	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		<p>August 2025: This is a longer-term action which cannot be progressed until work-related learning opportunities and Supported Internships are embedded within the organisation.</p>
6.2.5	Work with Newbury College and 'Ways into Work' to increase the number of supported internships available locally	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: SEN Manager – Post-16 (WBC) Action Contributor(s): Managing Director Ways into Work / Newbury College	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		<p>June 2025: Over 10 students from Newbury college were put forward for supported internship in the last year. There was some delay in some of the internships starting whilst work to assess suitability and finding an appropriate work placement, matched to the young person's interests were sought.</p> <p>August 2025: The pilot year with Newbury College and within the West Berkshire geography was a complex journey but still resulted in some really positive outcomes and there is continued support for these young people from Ways into Work going forward.</p> <p>As a snapshot, there are 8 West Berkshire young people registered for a Supported Internship Placement for the academic year 2025-2026 including students at Newbury College, Brookfields School and Reading College.</p>
6.2.6	Support the mobilisation of the newly procured joint children's and adult's Supported Employment Service, ensuring effective implementation. Establish a process to monitor its impact and effectiveness, while also developing and strengthening referral pathways to maximise access for young people with SEND.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Commissioning Team (WBC) Action Contributor(s): SEND Strategy Officer (WBC) / Managing Director Ways into Work	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		<p>March 2025: New service starts on 01/04. It will be a combined commissioned children's and adults supported employment service.</p> <p>August 2025: There are no further updates at this time, as progress on this action remains dependent on the Commissioning Team being in post. For the latest recruitment update, please refer to action 4.1.3. However, Ways into Work continue to be highly engaged—particularly from a children's perspective—and will be working with us to deliver the priorities outlined in our successful NDTi grant application focused on internships work.</p>

6.2.7	Conduct a data gathering exercise to understand the demand for Apprenticeships among young people with SEND, including their preferred sectors and career aspirations. Use this insight to inform a market engagement piece with training providers, and employers, addressing barriers and encouraging the development of suitable Apprenticeship opportunities.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: SEN Manager – Post-16 (WBC) Action Contributor(s): SEND Strategy Officer / (WBC) / West Berkshire Parent/Carer Forum	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		<p>August 2025: Phase transfers for the next academic year will begin from September 2025. To support planning, we need to understand the level of interest in Apprenticeships and ensure we are targeting that interest appropriately.</p> <p>The Annual Review paperwork for Year 9 and above has been updated to better capture discussions around preparing for adulthood. However, it has been agreed that this revised paperwork will not be implemented at this stage, due to current capacity constraints within the SEND team that impact our ability to meet statutory duties related to Annual Reviews.</p> <p>Historically, a letter has been sent to families at the point of Phase Transfer to prompt conversations about next steps. Schools remain best placed to assess whether a young person is ready for an Apprenticeship pathway.</p> <p>It is important that we avoid a one-size-fits-all approach to Apprenticeships. We must be cautious not to over-promote opportunities that may not be available or suitable for every young person.</p> <p>The SEND Team will conduct the data gathering exercise as part of the Phase Transfer process.</p>
6.2.8	Work with employers to understand, and address, barriers to offering Apprenticeships for young people with SEND, providing guidance and support to increase employer confidence and participation.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: SEN Manager – Post-16 (WBC) Action Contributor(s): SEND Strategy Officer (WBC) / Newbury College	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		<p>August 2025: The Careers and Enterprise Company are completing market engagement work as part of driving forward the apprenticeship agenda. Suggested this action is picked up through the work as we develop a Berkshire wide SEND Employment Forum.</p>
6.2.9	Ensure the organisation remains up to date with national and local developments in Apprenticeships, adapting approaches to reflect policy changes and best practices. Work to attract high quality training providers in the area to improve the availability and accessibility of Apprenticeship opportunities for young people with SEND.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: HR (WBC) Action Contributor(s): SEND Strategy Officer / SEN Manager – Post-16 (WBC)	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		<p>August 2025: There are a number of high-quality training providers in the area, but no Apprenticeships. Some employers who do offer Apprenticeships may opt to use the cheaper training providers which in some cases means 100% online delivery for the 20% 'off the job' time. West Berkshire have recently signed the Salisbury Framework which is a procurement system with a pre-determined list of providers. The local training provider: West Berkshire Training Consortium is not on this list, which may limit the work the Council can do with them.</p>
6.2.10	Assess the appetite for a joint SEND Employment Forum across Berkshire West (and beyond where applicable in line with government unitary authority direction) to enhance cross-border collaboration. This will involve engaging with key stakeholders to explore the potential benefits, feasibility and structure of such a forum.	December 2025	Lead Action Owner: SEND Strategy Officer (WBC) Action Contributor(s): SEN Manager - Post-16 (WBC) / Managing Director Ways into Work	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		<p>August 2025: Initial discussions have commenced with neighbouring Berkshire local authorities to launch a Berkshire-wide SEND Employment Forum. Draft Terms of Reference have been prepared and will be agreed at the inaugural meeting due to be scheduled for September 2025. This work is being supported by an Associate from the NDTi. First meeting in September 2025 will see the Black Country Forum share how they have embedded a cross Local Authority SEND Employment Forum.</p>
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased numbers of young people with SEND in supported internships Increased numbers of young people with SEND in supported internships with WBC Increased numbers of young people in Apprenticeships 						

6.3	Work with local mainstream and specialist FE providers to improve provision for work-related learning.					
6.3.1	Develop a Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and FE Providers setting out the expected uses of Element 3 funding	December 2025	Lead Action Owner: SEND Strategy Officer (WBC)	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		<p>March 2025: Being reviewed by Legal team. Believe a NASS standard contract agreement may be a better approach.</p> <p>August 2025: The legal team has prepared a draft letter intended for use with FE providers. However, before it can be adopted, the Interim Principal SEN Manager needs to gather some additional information.</p>
6.3.2	Implement transition checklist within Annual Review process, ensuring an effective transition from school to FE college. Test the checklist in practice and monitor its impact on facilitating a smoother and more successful transition for young people with SEND.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Interim Principal SEN Manager (WBC)	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		<p>July 2025: A decision has been made not to implement the transition checklist at this time due to lack of capacity to fulfil our statutory duties with regards to Annual Reviews. It feels inappropriate to ask schools to complete this amended paperwork when we do not currently have the capacity to review, or process, it.</p> <p>August 2025: If West Berkshire does move to a SEN Hub, such as the Idox EHC Hub, all documentation will need to be reviewed and templates created, which will include the transition checklist. Therefore, at this time, it would be appropriate to wait for the decision regarding the SEN Hub and including the transition checklist as part of this work.</p>
6.3.3	Ensure professionals are aware of young people's rights to communicate independently from the age of 16, provided they have the mental capacity to do so, and involve them directly in decision-making with an awareness that young person, and parent views may sometimes differ. Empower Parent Champions to advocate for young people's voice, helping parents to understand their child's rights.	December 2025	<p>Lead Action Owner: Head of SEND (WBC)</p> <p>Action Contributor(s): Interim Head of Early Years and Participation & Engagement (WBC) / Parent Champions</p>	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		<p>March 2025: PfA group discussed the need to ensure there is the right representation at the group. Beth Kelly to be invited to the next meeting on 19/05.</p> <p>August 2025: This action is dependent on the appointment of a Head of SEND, a post which is not yet filled. The action will remain on hold until such time a Head of SEND is in post.</p>
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEET data • Consistent offer across settings • Destination measures • Decrease in number of ISP placements • Increased number of ceased EHCPs 						
6.4	Work with Adult Social Care to ensure opportunities for young people with SEND to meaningfully engage and participate in their local community.					
6.4.1	Gather the views of young people with SEND & their parents/carers to understand the services they believe are needed for meaningful engagement and participation. Use this feedback to create, and promote, a directory of services	December 2025	<p>Lead Action Owner: Team Leader - Transitions (WBC)</p> <p>Action</p>	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		<p>March 2025: PfA group discussed the need for a plan to progress this work. Richard and Magda to produce a plan which will be shared at the next meeting on 19/05.</p> <p>August 2025: A draft directory is already in place, which requires some updating. The draft version is shared with clients and their families during their visits. There is also information available on the Council's website and Directory.</p>

	offering meaningful activities for young people who may not be able to access paid employment, ensuring the directory aligns with their needs and preferences.		Contributor(s): Social Worker ASC / SEN Manager - Post-16 (WBC)			
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Reduction in ISP placementsReduction in residential placements for 18-25 year olds						
6.5	Ensure pathways from children to adults' health services work smoothly and are clearly understood.					
6.5.1	Audit and review effectiveness/engagement of the impact of letters sent by Children's Community Nurses informing families of transition progress for the young person for whom the letter was intended.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Community Children's Nurse & Specialist School Nurse Manager (BHFT)	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		August 2025: Confirmed that letters are sent out to inform families of 14, 16 and 18-year-olds of right to have an LD health check from team in the west to support in engagement.
6.5.2	Map the transition pathways for all health services accessed by young people with SEND, ensuring young person voice is incorporated in this activity. There will be established working links between the Local Offer and BHFT & RBFT websites. This information should be in a clear and accessible format to support effective transitions.	January 2026	Lead Action Owner: Designated Clinical Officer (BOB ICB)	Priority 6: Preparation for Adulthood		August 2025: Will be picked up through One Page Service offer work. See update to action 2.2.2
Measures of success (how will we know?) <ul style="list-style-type: none">Number of LD Health checks completed						
7. Enablers						
No.	Task & Actions	Timeline	Owner	Governance 1 April 2025-31 March 2026	RAG Status *	Commentary
7.1	Maintain, and build upon the progress made with the development of a digital plan and creation of SEND data dashboards. This will enable us to continue to collect, use and share data more effectively. The evolution of the SEND Data Dashboards will provide	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Strategic Support (WBC)	Data Task & Finish Group SEND Strategic Improvement Board		July 2025: The SEND Data Dashboard requires further development. The Internal Data Task Group has agreed that there should be a single, centralised dashboard that can be adapted for different purposes—such as strategic or operational use. A paper was presented to DMT, where it was agreed to pause publication of the current dashboard due to concerns around data quality. A meeting is scheduled for 7 August 2025 with wider education colleagues to agree on the key data

	leaders with continued effective oversight.					<p>points and prioritise the next phase of dashboard development.</p> <p>August 2025: In early August, a discussion was held with the wider education management team to emphasise the importance of applying the insights gained from the strategic review of the CapitaONE system. The aim is to reduce reliance on spreadsheets maintained outside the system, thereby improving data accuracy and ensuring information is accessible to those who need it.</p> <p>Development of the data dashboard is ongoing, with several colleagues focused on improving data accuracy and identifying key metrics for inclusion. This includes collaboration between the SEND Strategy Officer and health colleagues. The NHS has proposed a core set of SEND data points that would benefit both health and the local authority, helping to reduce duplication.</p> <p>Additionally, if the Idox EHC Hub is adopted, it offers a built-in, sophisticated data dashboard that could further enhance data visibility and reporting.</p>
7.2	Maintain the established governance structure for signing off data that enables accuracy to be checked, priorities to be identified and actions monitored across all partner agencies.	March 2026	<p>Lead Action Owner: Head of SEND (WBC)</p> <p>Action Contributor(s): SEND Strategy Officer (WBC)</p>	<p>Quarterly Multi-Agency Data Scrutiny & Accountability Meeting</p> <p>SEND Strategic Improvement Board</p>		<p>March 2025: Data dashboards are presented at DMT for approval. The newly formed cross agency data scrutiny and accountability group feed into the SEND Strategic Improvement Board. This enabler has been reworded in this delivery plan to ensure momentum around this area of work.</p> <p>August 2025: A data scrutiny and accountability meeting has been established and takes place ahead of the SEND Strategic Improvement Board. However, its impact has been limited so far, due to ongoing development of the SEND data dashboard and continued concerns around data accuracy.</p>
7.3	Routinely share SEND Data with schools (heads, governors and SENDCos) and use this to collectively identify actions that support improvement.	March 2026	<p>Lead Action Owner: Head of SEND (WBC)</p> <p>Action Contributor(s): Service Director Education & SEND (WBC)</p>	SEND Strategic Improvement Board		<p>March 2025: This work is delayed; there is a requirement to develop a mechanism of sharing data with schools.</p> <p>August 2025: No further updates. See update to enabler 7.2.</p>
7.4	Work with Public Health, and other partners, to improve the SEND content of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) to enable the local area to better meet need in the future.	March 2026	<p>Lead Action Owner: Public Health</p> <p>Action Contributor(s): SEND Strategy Officer (WBC)</p>	<p>Priority 2: Early Intervention</p> <p>SEND Sufficiency Plan Task & Finish Group (Annual)</p>		<p>March 2025: This work is delayed. Public Health have been working to recruit to a data analyst with one of their responsibilities being to review and update the JSNA. It is anticipated this update would also include a 'State of the Nation' report which sets out key health and social care needs of the population. It is anticipated that the review will be conducted by December 2025 and the 'State of the Nation' report will be published by March 2026.</p> <p>The SEND Sufficiency data will be shared with Public Health.</p> <p>August 2025: Public Health have now recruited a data analyst and are currently producing a 'State of the Nation' JSNA which will be going to the Health & Wellbeing Board in September to inform the Board's priorities. This report will set out the key health and social care needs of the population. Given the tight timeframe of this report, it is concise and not exhaustive and there has been limited opportunity for engagement with colleagues and partners. To address this, Public Health will be undertaking a review of the JSNA's structure, content, and delivery model which will run until Autumn/Winter 2025. The aim is to ensure the JSNA is fit for purpose in informing local decision making and to guide the development of a more systematic and collaborative approach, involving partners from across the system.</p>

7.5	Explore opportunities to digitise Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).	December 2025	Lead Action Owner: Interim Principal SEN Manager (WBC)	Data Task & Finish Group		<p>March 2025: Opportunities have been explored with Idox EHC Hub and Agilisy's EHCP Plus with the latter offering a free trial. This is being explored with support from West Berkshire's transformation team.</p> <p>August 2025: Following a review of the available options, the Idox EHC Hub has been identified as the preferred solution. This is due to its potential to reduce the administrative workload for SEND team colleagues and its comprehensive support for the Annual Review process, an area where we are currently non-compliant.</p> <p>The Idox EHC Hub offers a full case management system that provides a more effective solution for both new statutory assessments and Annual reviews. Our current provider, CapitaONE/MRI have confirmed that no system enhancements will be made before 2026, rendering the platform inadequate for the operational needs of the SEND Team. In response to the need raised by the SEN Team and the inability of CapitaONE to provide a suitable solution, the SEND Strategy Officer is in the process of drafting a business case to support the adoption of the Idox EHC Hub.</p>
7.6	Develop a commissioning and quality assurance resource and function to support the placements of children and young people with SEND.	September 2025	Lead Action Owner: Service Director Education & SEND (WBC)	SEND Strategic Improvement Board		<p>August 2025: The structure of the new Commissioning Team is as follows:</p> <pre> graph TD SL[Service Lead: Commissioning] --> MD[Sufficiency and Market Development Lead] SL --> QC[Quality, Contracts & Complaints Manager] SL --> SBO[Senior Brokerage Officer] SL --> SC[Senior Commissioner: Joint Commissioning] MD --> RPO[Recruitment & Publicity Officer] QC --> CQA[Contracts & Quality Assurance lead] QC --> CO[Contracts Officer] QC --> SAR[SARs Officer] QC --> CPO[Complaints Officer] SBO --> BO1[Brokerage Officer] SBO --> BO2[Brokerage Officer] SBO --> BO3[Brokerage Officer] SC --> SSL[SEND Strategy Lead] subgraph Market_Development [Market Development] MD RPO end subgraph Quality QC CQA CO SAR CPO end subgraph Operational_Commissioning [Operational Commissioning] SBO BO1 BO2 BO3 end subgraph Joint_Commissioning [Joint Commissioning] SC SSL end </pre> <p>The following posts have been offered and are proceeding through the onboarding process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Lead • Contracts Officer • Quality Assurance Lead • Senior Brokerage Officer • Brokerage Officer <p>The following roles remain out for recruitment/have interviews scheduled:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint Commissioner • Market Development Manager • 1x Brokerage Officer
7.7	Review and refresh the Quality	October 2025	Lead Action	SEND Strategic		August 2025: The agreement to use the Invision360 EHCP and Annual Review tools was signed

	Assurance Framework for EHCPs, an example will be provided.		Owner: SEND Strategy Officer (WBC)	Improvement Board		<p>in July 2025. Since then, a number of colleagues from across the Local Area Partnership have received training on the EHCP tool. The SEND Re-banding Review Lead has also shared examples of quality assurance (QA) frameworks from other areas with the SEND Strategy Officer, who plans to begin co-producing a local QA framework from September 2025, following the summer break. Colleagues from across the Local Area Partnership have been asked for their availability to partake in this co-production activity. The plan is to also use the learning from the Courageous Conversation on the quality of EHCPs to inform the framework.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the SEND team will begin using the EHCP tool from October 2025, starting with a group session.</p> <p>Multi-agency quality assurance work continues between West Berkshire, Wokingham, and Reading, with Wokingham set to host the next audit session in September 2025. These sessions will be embedded into the developing QA framework. The SEND Strategy Officer will also work with Invision360 to explore how the EHCP tool can support these multi-agency audits, ensuring that QA data is collected in a consistent and unified format.</p>
7.8	Work effectively with our partners to improve governance and oversight of SEND provision.	September 2025	Lead Action Owner: Commissioning Team (WBC)	SEND Strategic Improvement Board		August 2025: This action has not started as is linked to the proposed new Children's Services Commissioning function.
7.9	Support the development and expansion of the newly created West Berkshire Parent/Carer Forum ensuring that leaders can respond to the views of children & young people and their families.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: Interim Head of Early Years and Participation & Engagement (WBC) Action Contributor(s): SEND Strategy Officer (WBC)	SEND Strategic Improvement Board		<p>March 2025: Regular support now in place for new PCF. Supporting recruitment to PCF via Directory, engagement events, Family Hubs, SEND Local Offer, 50 Things APP. PCF are attending Family Hub parent drop-ins. PCF membership expanding steadily and Contact Associate in place to support create PCF constitution and robust processes. Structure chart creation to support understanding of council services (post DBV) underway.</p> <p>August 2025: The relationship with the PCF continues to go from strength-to-strength Joint visits to all Short Breaks providers have taken place with the PCF and LA this quarter and will feed into the Short Breaks procurement exercise later this year.</p>
7.10	Enhance the work to support the SEND Youth Forum, ensuring that leaders can respond to the views of children and young people.	March 2026	Lead Action Owner: SEND Strategy Officer (WBC)	SEND Strategic Improvement Board		<p>March 2025: SEND Youth Participation Worker is now on maternity leave. There is not the capacity in other roles to pick up the oversight and running of the SEND Youth Forum. A strategic decision has been taken to pause the SEND Youth Forum for a period of 6 months, when this will be reviewed. It has been raised in the PfA Task Group that young person voice and young person co-production is currently lacking in our work.</p> <p>July 2025: The Parent Carer Forum (PCF) has raised concerns with the Service Director regarding the absence of a youth forum. The SEND Strategy Officer has also identified this as a significant gap and has suggested exploring whether the youth forum could be reinstated through the re-tendering of the SENDIASS contract, where it previously sat before being brought in-house. In parallel, there are ongoing discussions about broadening participation across children's services, including a previously developed bid for a dedicated participation team.</p> <p>August 2025: Children's Social Care has slightly increased their capacity in the Participation Team to further work with children in care and care leavers; this will ensure that those who are looked after with SEND have a forum to engage in and have their voice heard through this participation route.</p> <p>Regarding the development of a wider SEND Youth Forum, the SEND Strategy Officer has raised this proposal with colleagues in Procurement, who are currently overseeing the re-tendering process for SENDIASS services for the inclusion of a SEND Youth Forum within the future service offer however, for any provider to incorporate this element into their bid we would need to review</p>

						the existing budget to ensure feasibility as the current budget allocation would result in a reduced offer.
7.11	<p>Ensure the most efficient use of limited financial resources in the High Needs Block of funding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Banding exercise Use of Element 2 Review of HNB spend 	December 2025	<p>Lead Action Owner: SEND Re-banding Review Lead (WBC)</p>	SEND Strategic Improvement Board		<p>March 2025: This work is ongoing through the outcomes of the SEND Banding Review and Schools Forum.</p> <p>August 2025 – Use of Element 2 Funding: The working group has produced a guide to SEND Funding for mainstream schools. It is in the process of being branded and is due to go out to schools in September. This includes information on the use of Element 2 funding.</p> <p>August 2025 – Banding Review: The mainstream working group has produced a framework for the new funding model for EHCPs in mainstream schools. Schools in the working group have tested it and fed back that the descriptors of levels of need are easy to apply. The SEND Service has been testing it over the July-August period which has informed minor amendments. Workshops are planned with schools in October 2025 to help them become familiar with/understand the new framework. The project lead is working with finance colleagues to model the funding levels. This will be taken to the working group in September 2025.</p> <p>The project lead is working with special schools to develop a simplified model based on descriptors of levels of need for special schools. Special school leaders have requested some minor changes which are being completed over August 2025 to take back to them in September 2025.</p> <p>The project lead is working with mainstream schools with SRPs and Designated Units to co-develop a simplified, fair, and transparent funding model based on descriptors of need. Visits took place over the summer term and descriptors are being drafted. Meetings are taking place with schools in September/October 2025 to agree these.</p>
7.12	<p>Develop a West Berkshire Schools Accessibility Policy (example provided) that supports delivery of the local area SEND and Inclusion Strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The implementation of this policy will be monitored, particularly through the auditing of school's SEN Information Reports to ensure the requirements of the Accessibility Policy are being met contributing to improving accessibility and inclusion for all pupils with SEND and those who are vulnerable. 	March 2026	<p>Lead Action Owner: SEND Strategy Officer (WBC)</p> <p>Action Contributor(s): School Improvement (WBC)</p>	Priority 3: Inclusion		<p>March 2025: Accessibility Policy has been written and is published on the Local Offer although the page on which this is hosted needs to be completed once Local Offer pathways have been determined.</p> <p>This enabler has been extended in this new delivery plan to ensure there is some monitoring of schools SEN Information reports etc. as outlined in the Accessibility Policy.</p> <p>August 2025: There is a requirement to identify the most appropriate colleague/Team to maintain oversight of the SEN Information report information to ensure the Accessibility Policy is being adhered to.</p>
7.13	<p>We will ensure our SEND Local Offer is a dynamic and user-friendly resource that meets the needs of children, young people, their families and professionals. To achieve this, we will focus on the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuous Improvement: Regular reviews and feedback will shape ongoing development, keeping the 	March 2026	<p>Lead Action Owner: Head of SEND (WBC)</p> <p>Action Contributor(s): SEND Strategy Officer (WBC)</p>	SEND Strategic Improvement Board		<p>March 2025: New enabler added to the delivery plan for 2025-2026.</p> <p>August 2025: Work is underway to review and update the content of the Local Offer. The Specialist Information Officer for Early Years and the Local Offer has asked the Interim Principal SEN Manager to review specific pages and make any necessary updates.</p> <p>Once there is confidence in the accuracy and quality of the information hosted, a co-production event will be held with stakeholders. This event will focus on testing how easily users can find information and on designing the structure of the Local Offer pathways—i.e. where and how information is presented.</p>

	<div>Local Offer relevant, accessible, and reflective of available support.</div> <div><div><div>•</div><div>Effective Governance: A clear decision-making structure will be in place to drive improvements, respond to feedback, and ensure the Local Offer evolves in line with local needs and strategic priorities.</div></div><div><div>•</div><div>Accountable Leadership: An accountable officer will oversee the improvements, statutory compliance and co-production with families and stakeholders.</div></div></div>					
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*RAG Status				
Not started	Overdue/Unresolved Issue	Partial Completion	Started – On Track	Completed

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Proposals for the Recruitment and Support of Two Young Person Co-optees

Committee considering report:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Date of Committee:	11 September 2025
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Jeff Brooks
Date Service Director agreed report: (for Corporate Board)	
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	
Report Author:	Gordon Oliver

1 Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to set out the proposed approach for the recruitment of two young people as co-opted members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, as required by Part 6.10 of the Council's Constitution. It also sets out how ongoing support will be provided, along with training for Members and the young people, and the safeguarding protocols that will be put in place.

2 Recommendation(s)

That the Committee endorses the proposed approach, including:

- (a) The proposed process and timescales for the recruitment of two young people as Co-opted Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.
- (b) The proposed support arrangements to be put in place for the two young people.
- (c) The proposed training to be provided to the young people, Members and other Co-opted Members of the Committee.
- (d) The proposed safeguarding protocols to be put in place.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	There will be a cost to provide external support for the young people who will be co-opted onto the Committee, and for providing training on how Members and Young People can work together effectively. It is proposed that this be funded from

Proposals for the Recruitment and Support of Two Young Person Co-optees

	the Member Training Budget. However, it should be noted that the Member Training Budget is only £15k per financial year, so this proposal would only leave £11k to complete training items. Otherwise, this would cause a budget pressure.			
Human Resource:	There are no HR implications.			
Legal:	<p>There is no legal requirement to appoint young people as Co-opted Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee. This is a local decision in accordance with Part 6.10 of the Council's Constitution.</p> <p>The Council has a legal duty to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the young people who are being co-opted onto the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>Furthermore, the Local Authority has a duty to undertake checks with the Disclosure & Barring Service for anyone who has contact with children or access to their files. All members on the CYPSC should have completed these checks.</p>			
Risk Management:	Co-opting young people onto the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee introduces additional risks in relation to safeguarding and welfare. These risks are being mitigated through a comprehensive package of support, training, and the introduction of safeguarding protocols as set out in Section 5 of this report.			
Property:	None			
Policy:	The government's statutory guidance on overview and scrutiny stresses the benefits of co-option in terms of providing specialist external expertise.			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				

Proposals for the Recruitment and Support of Two Young Person Co-optees

A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		There are no direct impacts arising from this report.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		There are no direct impacts arising from this report.
Environmental Impact:		X		None
Health Impact:		X		None
ICT Impact:		X		None
Digital Services Impact:		X		None
Council Strategy Priorities:	X			Appointment of young people as Co-opted Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is consistent with Priority 5A of the Council Strategy: <i>'Encourage and support our local communities to take the lead in driving what is important to them'</i> .
Core Business:		X		This is business as usual activity.
Data Impact:		X		None

Consultation and Engagement:	<p>The following have been consulted on this report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nicola Thomas, Annmarie Dodds and Rebecca Wilshire• Finance• HR• Corporate Board• Members of the Executive• WBC Procurement Service
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4 Executive Summary

This report updates Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on proposals for the recruitment of young people as Co-opted Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee. It also provides assurance regarding the arrangements being put in place around support and training to facilitate the effective engagement of the young people in the scrutiny process, and the safeguarding protocols that have been developed to ensure their safety and welfare.

5 Supporting Information

Background

- 5.1 As part of the changes to local scrutiny arrangements agreed at the Annual Meeting of Council on 15 May 2025, it was decided that West Berkshire Council would go above and beyond the statutory requirements and appoint two young people as Co-opted Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee. It is hoped that the young people will provide a different perspective as service users, and will enhance the scrutiny process. As non-statutory co-optees, the young people will not be permitted to vote, but they will be permitted to speak to any item considered by the Committee.
- 5.2 The co-option of young people to the Committee will require additional protocols to be put in place to address safeguarding issues, as well as specialist training for Members and the young people to ensure they can work together effectively. It is recognised that the young people will require support to understand the reports, and to develop suitable lines of questioning. Proposed arrangements are set out below.

Proposals

Recruitment

- 5.3 It is proposed to commence the recruitment process for the two young people by the end of September. An advert will be sent to all secondary schools and Newbury College for distribution via their parent/pupil newsletters. Children's Services will be asked to circulate this to children in their care. It is also proposed to promote the role through the Residents Newsletter and the Council's social media channels and via Berkshire Youth.

Proposals for the Recruitment and Support of Two Young Person Co-optees

Applicants will be asked to confirm their eligibility for the role and to complete a short personal statement (see Appendix A).

- 5.4 It is proposed that candidates be interviewed so they understand what will be expected of them and to give Members and officers confidence that they would have the requisite skills and attitude to play an active role on the committee and to enhance the level of scrutiny provided by the Committee. It is proposed that the interview panel include the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee, the Principal Policy Officer (Scrutiny and Democratic Services), and an officer experienced in working with young people, probably from Children's Services.
- 5.5 Assuming that two suitable candidates can be found, they would be appointed at the next meeting of the Committee, and formally confirmed at the next meeting of Council. The agreed terms of reference for the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee do not specify the term of the appointments, but it is suggested that they should be for a period of two years. This would be the same as for parent governor co-opted members.
- 5.6 Although non-statutory co-optees are not entitled to vote on matters considered by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, they will be allowed to speak to any item on the agenda, and they will have access to the same information provided to other committee members. As a consequence of this status, it will be necessary for co-opted members to be bound by the Members' Code of Conduct, and to sign a Declaration of Interest form. The Monitoring Officer / Deputy Monitoring Officer will provide one to one training on these aspects.

Support Arrangements

- 5.7 Given the age of the young people, it is proposed that in addition to standard induction and scrutiny training, ongoing support be provided to cover:
 - Training for councillors and young people on how to work effectively with one another;
 - Support in understanding the papers, drawing up lines of enquiry, and asking questions at a public meeting;
 - Attendance at pre-meetings in support of the co-optees;
 - Attendance at committee meetings to support the young people; and
 - Support in helping the co-optees reach out to groups of young people to understand their views better.
- 5.8 Specific and tailored support will be provided should individuals have additional needs.
- 5.9 A suggested scope is provided in Appendix A. This has been developed with reference to that used by Oxfordshire County Council.
- 5.10 It is proposed to go out to tender at the end of September, to seek expressions of interest amongst external providers for providing the above support as this expertise is

not believed to be available internally. It is proposed this would be funded from the Members training budget.

Safeguarding Protocols

5.11 Co-opting young people introduces additional risks, particularly in relation to safeguarding. Provision of a support package as identified above would go some way to mitigating this risk, but a number of additional measures are also proposed, including:

- Obtaining parental consent forms for the participation of any minors;
- DBS checks for scrutiny/democratic services officers and all Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee and their Substitutes;
- Asking the young people to join meetings remotely wherever possible¹ and providing training on participation in hybrid meetings;
- Ensuring that at least two officers are in attendance throughout any meetings and generally where a young person is physically present;
- Enhanced safeguarding training for Scrutiny/Democratic Services Officers;
- A named safeguarding lead and escalation point;
- Training for Members on working with young people in a committee environment;
- Ensuring that all communication with the young people is undertaken via email, and is routed through Scrutiny/Democratic Services Officers, with a parent (or other nominated adult representative) copied into all email correspondence with minors;
- Not publishing or anonymising Declarations of Interest for the young people on the Council's website;
- Not publishing or anonymising the full names of the young people in meeting papers or on the list of committee members on the Council's website;
- Live streaming meetings in such a way as to prevent the young person from appearing on the video. If they were attending in person, this could be achieved through appropriate camera positioning. If they were joining remotely, this could be achieved through adjusting the settings in the Zoom webinar, where panellists can be prevented from starting their video.

¹ Remote attendance would be permitted since the young people would not be voting. It may also be advantageous, given that meetings are held in the evenings. However, remote attendance may not be possible for some people (e.g., due to internet connection issues, not having a quiet space at home from which to join the meeting, etc). Provision must therefore be made for the young people to attend meetings in person. This would require arrangements for them to get home at the end of the meeting

6 Other options considered

Support Arrangements

- 6.1 The Council could seek to provide support to the young people using existing, internal staff resources. The Democratic Services Team does not have the requisite skills or experience of working with young people, so support would need to be sourced from other services that regularly work with children and young people. However, it is likely that there would be limited capacity in these areas to take on additional work. In future, if an officer was to be recruited to provide support for the Youth Council or a Youth Executive, then there may be an opportunity to incorporate this function into their role.

Safeguarding

- 6.2 Not having young people in the Council Chamber, or not allowing them to start their video on Zoom may represent a barrier to effective participation. An alternative option might be to not live-stream meetings or to edit videos before they are uploaded to YouTube. However, they would still be visible to any members of the public or third parties who may be present to observe/participate in the meeting.

7 Conclusion

The proposals set out in this report are designed to ensure the effective participation of young people as Co-opted Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, while mitigating any associated risks in relation to safeguarding.

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix A – Proposed advert and expression of interest form
- 8.2 Appendix B – Tender specification for provision of support services

Corporate Board's recommendation

*(add text)

Background Papers:

[Part 6.10 of the Council's Constitution](#)

[Agenda and Minutes for Annual Meeting of Council, 15 May 2025](#)

[West Berkshire Council Strategy 2023-27](#)

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐ No: ☒

Proposals for the Recruitment and Support of Two Young Person Co-optees

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	<input type="checkbox"/>
Considered or reviewed by one of the Council's Scrutiny Committees or associated Task Groups within the preceding six months	<input type="checkbox"/>
Item is Urgent Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Report is to note only	<input type="checkbox"/>

Wards affected: N/A

Officer details:

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Document Control

Document Ref:		Date Created:	
Version:		Date Modified:	
Author:			
Owning Service			

Change History

Version	Date	Description	Change ID
1	26 June 2025	First Draft	
2	8 July 2025	Incorporating comments from Nicki Thomas	

Appendix A

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Young Person Co-opted Member Vacancies (x2)

West Berkshire Council is seeking expressions of interest from young people, or representatives of organisations that work with local children and young people, to be part of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

What is the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee?

The Committee is responsible for reviewing the decisions, policies, and services of West Berkshire Council that relate to Children's Social Care, Early Help, Education, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and Early Years.

About the role

This is an exciting new role where you will be able to make a genuine difference to the provision of services for children, young people and their families in West Berkshire through the scrutiny process.

Scrutiny fulfils an important 'checks and balance role' to ensure that the decisions of the Council's Executive are in the best interests of local residents. Also, it helps to ensure that the Council is providing high-quality services for its children and young people that are effective while representing good value for money.

By law, committees with responsibility for scrutinising Education matters are required to have two parent governor representatives from maintained schools – one from a primary school and one from a secondary school. They are also required to have representatives from the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church. These are in addition to the nine elected Councillors appointed to the committee.

Here in West Berkshire, we have gone a step further. We are looking to bring two young people onto the committee, so your voices are heard, and so you are able to influence decisions about the services that affect you. Although the young people will not be able to take part in any votes, they will be able to speak to any item considered by the committee.

There will be four scheduled meetings of the committee each year, but occasionally additional meetings may be required to deal with urgent items or where Executive decisions that have been taken are 'called-in' for review prior to implementation. Meetings are held at the Council Offices at Market Street, Newbury, RG14 5LD, and take place on weekday evenings starting at 18:30. However, it is anticipated that you would be able to attend meetings virtually via Zoom.

In recognition of the time commitment, you will be paid an allowance (this is set at £1,132 for 2025/26).

Appendix A

About You

Your contribution will be vital to ensuring effective scrutiny in West Berkshire. As a co-opted member of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, you will be expected to:

- Prepare for meetings by thoroughly reading the agenda.
- Actively participate in meetings
- Represent the views of parents and pupils on education matters.
- Identify issues related to education services in West Berkshire that merit further consideration.
- Build your understanding of scrutiny by attending training organised and/or paid for by West Berkshire Council and by reading relevant guidance as advised by officers of the Council.

We are looking for people who:

- Are non-political and independent.
- Can analyse and evaluate data and research presented in reports, identifying potential outcomes and recommendations that would improve services.
- Are able to review performance and service delivery data, and can help to investigate, identify and make recommendations to address the causes of underperformance.
- Have strong listening and questioning skills.
- Have confidence in challenging others appropriately and be prepared to test answers to questions, assumptions and statements.

Support

We will provide you with training so you understand the role and your responsibilities. We will also provide someone to support you by:

- Helping you to understand the reports and prepare questions;
- Attend any pre-meetings with you;
- Support you at meetings; and
- Helping you with engagement of other young people to understand their views better (e.g., through online surveys).

Eligibility

To be eligible for the role, you will need to be a young person aged 23 or under who lives in West Berkshire, or a representative of an organisation that works with children and young people in the District.

How to Apply

If you would like to be considered for the role, you will need to provide your details and a short, personal statement using the attached form.

Appendix A

Please note that, as a co-opted member of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, you will be subject to the Council's code of conduct and will be required to Council's Code of Conduct as set out in [Part 13 of the Council's Constitution](#).

The closing date for completed nominations is **XX October 2025**.

Further Information

If you have any questions about the application process or if you would like to find out more about the role, then please contact

Gordon Oliver
Principal Policy Officer (Democratic Services and Scrutiny)
Tel: 01635 519486
Email: gordon.oliver1@westberks.gov.uk

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Appendix B

Support for Young People as Co-opted Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

West Berkshire Council is seeking to commission a package of support for the two young people who will be co-opted onto its Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

The commission involves:

- assisting the two young co-optees to prepare for pre-meetings and formal committee meetings, including helping them to interpret the reports, and formulate lines of questioning;
- providing support to them during formal meetings;
- providing training to all committee members on collaborating with young people.

The commission supports the objective set out in the Council Strategy 2023-2027 to: *'enable the seldom heard, including young people, to have a voice in local issues...'*

About overview and scrutiny at West Berkshire Council

The purpose of overview and scrutiny is to improve the lives of local residents through improved public services and ensure that public funds are spent effectively. This is achieved by holding the Executive and other decision makers to account and by undertaking reviews of public services delivered by the council and its partners.

Scrutiny committees have the power to look at any issue which affects the area or the area's inhabitants, and this gives them a unique legitimacy to examine cross-cutting issues in a way that no other individual or organisation can.

The four principles of effective scrutiny are:

- provide constructive 'critical friend' challenge;
- amplify the voices and concerns of the public;
- be led by independent people who take responsibility for their role;
- drive improvement in public services and strategic decision making.

The Council has three overview and scrutiny committees:

- Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
- Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee
- Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee

Further information about overview and scrutiny at West Berkshire Council is set out in the [Council's constitution](#). Agendas and minutes from all the council's overview and scrutiny committees are available on the [Council's website](#).

Appendix B

Brief

On 15 May 2025, West Berkshire Council agreed to establish a Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee. The committee meets formally at the Council's Market Street Offices in Newbury, with four scheduled meetings per year. It includes nine district councillors and six co-opted members, including two parent governors, two diocesan representatives, and two young people.

The council is in the process of inviting nominations for the two young people co-optees and it is hoped that they will be appointed at the meeting on 4 December 2025. Their appointments will be for a two-year term.

The Council would like to commission an organisation with good knowledge of the district, and extensive experience of youth voice activities to provide a tailored package of support to the two young co-optees. The requirements are set out below:

1. To build and maintain a positive and safe, professional relationship with the two young co-optees and to be their first point of contact for support with committee work. It should be assumed that the young co-optees will deal directly with the council on administrative issues, such as meeting invitations and agenda papers.
2. To put appropriate risks assessments in place, building on those already developed by the Council.
3. To directly support the two young co-optees to help them prepare effectively for the formal committee meetings and pre-meetings with councillors. This includes:
 - reading the committee papers in advance and independently of the young people;
 - handling any confidential information sensitively;
 - receiving a briefing (by video call) on the forthcoming agenda and any specific matters arising in relation to it from a scrutiny officer.
4. To hold preparation meetings with the young co-optees (by video call) following publication of the agenda, but prior to each formal Committee meeting to encourage conversation about the Committee's agenda issues and specifically: explore if there is anything they don't understand or need more information about. This meeting should also be used to support the young people to formulate their questions for use during the formal committee meeting and preparing them to speak at the pre-meeting with councillors and at the formal committee meeting.
5. To directly support the two young co-optees to fully participate in any pre-meetings held in advance of the committee meeting. These would be private, video-call meetings that would be expected to last for around 30-45 minutes, and are arranged by the council's Principal Policy Officer.
6. To directly support the two young co-optees to fully participate in formal committee meetings, alongside a member of the Scrutiny team. These meetings are livestreamed and recorded. This support includes:

Appendix B

- meeting with the young co-optees prior to the start of the meeting to help them be ready for the meeting
- ensuring they know how best to communicate with their support person during the meeting
- helping the young people to actively participate at appropriate times and providing discreet support on issues such as clarification of any language or process they do not understand (support from democratic services will also be available).
- picking up on cues on any changes to their personal wellbeing and resilience during the meeting and encouraging them to take a break where appropriate
- debriefing with the young people after the meeting

(NB: It is anticipated that the young people would join the scrutiny meetings remotely via Zoom.)

7. To directly support the two young co-optees to fully participate in any additional meetings arranged by the committee such as occasional work-planning or specific briefings, if required.
8. To prepare and deliver an in-person training session for all committee members on effectively working with young people, and the diverse community we live in. The initial training session should take place before the first committee meeting of the new democratic cycle which is on 13 June. The training should last between 90 and 120 minutes and ideally involve the young co-optees in its planning and delivery.

Your response

Your response should focus on how your organisation can support the requirements set out in this brief, providing evidence of your experience to illustrate points.

Deliverables:

In terms of deliverables, we require:

- provision of direct support to two young people to support their full participation in West Berkshire Council's Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee's meetings, pre-meetings, and other activities as appropriate to their role as co-optees
- guaranteed (remote) attendance alongside the two young co-optees at all formal committee meetings, pre-meetings and any other meetings related to the committee
- provision of a live risk assessment and log
- a commitment to debrief council representatives after each formal committee meeting, including any matters arising as relevant to the two young people's full participation in committee meetings and activities as appropriate to their role as co-optees.
- delivery of training as specified
- ongoing liaison with the council including monitoring processes (to be agreed)

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Your response (technical):

In your response, please provide details of:

- your organisation's experience of effectively supporting young people on a one-to-one basis to fully participate in meetings, and specifically to contribute their own views and opinions
- your organisation's experience of supporting young people to develop and grow
- your organisation's experience of delivering training on working with young people in the workplace
- your organisation's safeguarding policy and procedures as you feel it applies to this brief
- your organisation's equality, diversity and inclusion policy and procedures as you feel it applies to this brief
- the key project team responsible for delivering this work
- information about the data collection and data storage arrangements which you adhere to in order to comply with General Data Protection Regulation/Data Protection Act requirements
- confirmation that you can deliver to the initial dates in the timetable provided (if this is not possible, please indicate availability)

Key dates	
Quotation exercise completed	31 October 2025
Appoint supplier and initiate contract	7 November 2025
Deliver the training session for the committee	W/C 17 November 2025
First meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee	4 December 2025

Costing sheet

Please provide a completed copy of the attached costing sheet in your quotation response.

Terms and conditions

West Berkshire Council wishes to contract on terms and conditions set by the council which will govern this commission. We also require the supplier to sign a confidentiality agreement to protect the integrity of confidential information that staff will have access to through supporting the two young co-optees.

By sending in a quotation, you accept that these will be taken as accepted by your organisation with reasonable negotiations and associated amendments made. A copy of the council's draft and terms and conditions can be sent on request.

Payment schedule

The following payment schedule will be as agreed for the purposes of this contract with the successful supplier.

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Stage	Upfront/on-delivery
Set-up costs	100% upfront
Delivery of training	100% upfront
Support package for each committee meeting cycle	100% on-delivery
Additional activities e.g. to support co-optees to take part in additional committee business	50% upfront / 50% on-delivery

Invoicing details will be shared with the successful supplier within the award letter. We will subsequently send you a purchase order number which will be used for the entire contract.

How to submit your quote

Please send your completed bid to executivecycle@westberks.gov.uk. The deadline is 4pm on **31 October 2025**. Please ensure your quotation includes all of the information we have requested and that you have completed/included the pricing schedule.

Any points of clarification or questions should be sent in writing to executivecycle@westberks.gov.uk.

Evaluation

The contract will be awarded based on 60% cost and 40% technical/experience. As a minimum, the council must be satisfied that the potential successful supplier meets all the requirements of this project as detailed in the specification under 'technical'. Should clarifications be required, then these will be via email and sent to the address from which the quotation was received.

The lead officer will inform you of the decision made under this quotation exercise and should you like feedback on your quote, the council will be happy to provide this.

Freedom of information

If you consider that any of the information supplied in your proposal is either commercially sensitive, a trade secret or confidential in nature, this information should be clearly identified and

- a) the reasons for this given
- b) confirmation given of how long this will be the case.

West Berkshire Council is obliged to comply with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, and it may be appropriate for this information to be disclosed further to a request under the Act; however, in response to any such request the relevant material will be examined in the light of exemptions in the Act.

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Accessible digital standards

The supplier in the provision of their report and all publishable content shall comply with (or with equivalents to):

- the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2 Conformance Level AA; and
- (b) ISO/IEC 13066-1: 2011 Information Technology – Interoperability with assistive technology (AT) – Part 1: Requirements and recommendations for interoperability.

Attachments

Attachment 1: pricing schedule

The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

1. This document gives 28 clear days notice of key decisions which the Executive and Individual Executive Members or Officer expect to take.
2. The document is updated as required and is available to the public on the Council's website.
3. The Executive is made up of the Executive Leader, Deputy Leader and eight Executive Members with the following portfolios:

Leader of the Council and Executive Portfolio Holder for Strategy and Communications	Councillor Jeff Brooks
Deputy Leader and Executive Portfolio Holder for Children and Family Services	Councillor Heather Codling
Adult Social Care and Public Health	Councillor Patrick Clark
Finance and Resources	Councillor Iain Cottingham
Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside	Councillor Nigel Foot
Planning and Housing	Councillor Denise Gaines
Environment and Highways	Councillor Stuart Gourley
Public Safety and Capital Projects (Built Environment)	Councillor Tom McCann
Community Engagement, Economic Development and Regeneration and Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation	Councillor Justin Pemberton
Transformation and Corporate Programme	Councillor Vicky Poole

4. Key decisions are those executive decisions which are likely to result in spending or savings which are "significant" in relation to the budget for the service or function in question, or in terms of the effect on communities living or working in two or more wards or electoral divisions. All contracts above £500,000 require a key decision in accordance with the Constitution.
5. The Regulations and the Council's Constitution provide for urgent key decisions to be made, even though they have not been included in this document in accordance with General Exception and Special Urgency provisions.
6. The Forward Plan will also contain details of intended review activity by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission and its Sub-Committee(s) or another body e.g. Task Group associated with the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission.
7. Copies of the Council's Constitution and agenda and minutes for all meetings of the Council may be accessed on the Council's website.
8. For copies of reports or other documents, and for detailed information regarding specific issues to be considered by the Executive, individual Member or officer please contact the named Lead Officer for the item concerned.
9. For further details on the time of meetings and general information about the Plan please email executivecycle@westberkshire.gov.uk or by writing to the address below.

Publication Date: 1 September 2025

Nicola Thomas
Service Lead
Legal & Democratic Services
West Berkshire Council, Council Offices
Market Street
Newbury
RG14 5LD

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
25 Sep 2025	Youth Justice Annual Plan		No	Executive			Dave Wraight	Open
25 Sep 2025	Care Leaver Annual Report		No	Executive			Karl Davis	Open
25 Sep 2025	Revenue Financial Performance Report - Q1 of 2025/26	To report on the financial performance of the Council's revenue budgets and provide a year-end forecast.	Yes	Executive			Elizabeth Griffiths	Open
25 Sep 2025	ASC Annual Report		No	Executive			Melanie O'Rourke	Open
25 Sep 2025	Early Help Response Hub Annual report		No	Executive			Karen Atalla	Open
25 Sep 2025	Faraday Road 3G Pitch Development	To approve the inclusion of a 3G pitch at Faraday Rd in the Council's Capital Programme.	Yes	Executive	No statutory consultation needed. Discussion has taken place with football groups and will be subject to the		Jon Winstanley	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
					recommendations in the Playing Pitch Strategy refresh.			
25 Sep 2025	Section 20 Payment Policy	To introduce a Section 20 Parental Contribution Procedure	Yes	Executive			Rebecca Wilshire	Open
25 Sep 2025	Capital Financial Performance Report Q1 2025/26	To present the Q1 capital financial performance for Members to note.	Yes	Executive			Shail Vitish	Open
25 Sep 2025	Parking Delivery Plan 2024-2034	To approve and adopt the Council's Parking Strategy	No	Executive			Emma Jameson	Open
25 Sep 2025	Contracts for Award Under Delegated Authority from Executive	To gain approval from Executive to delegate authority to an individual (Service Lead or Service Director) to	Yes	Executive			Sarah Wood	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
		proceed with contract awards with a value in excess of £2.5M						
25 Sep 2025	Standing item: Asset Disposal		No	Executive			Richard Turner	Open
24 Oct 2025	Winter Service Plan 2025/26	To approve the Winter Service Plan 2025/26	Yes	Portfolio Holder: Environment and Highways	Consultation with Ward Members, Town/ Parish Councils and consideration of comments received, including comments from members of the public during the previous winter service season.		Andrew Reynolds	Open
6 Nov 2025	2025/26 Performance Report Q1		No	Executive			Beatriz Teixeira	Open
6 Nov 2025	Corporate		No	Executive			Karl Davis	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
	Parenting Panel Annual Report							
6 Nov 2025	Ridgeway Council Formal Proposal		Yes	Executive			Sarah Clarke	Open
6 Nov 2025	Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)	To share proposed measures set out in the Council's emerging Rights of Way Improvement Plan with decision makers and request approval to publish.	Yes	Executive			Kofi Adu-Gyamfi	Open
6 Nov 2025	Quarterly Financial Performance Report - Q2 of 2025/26	To report on the financial performance of the Council's revenue budgets and provide a year-	No	Executive			Toby Bradley	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
		end forecast.						
6 Nov 2025	Director of Public Health Annual Report		Yes	Executive			Dr Matt Pearce	Open
6 Nov 2025	Update on the PPP shared service contract	To fulfil the requirement of the IAA which is due to expire in January 2027, which requires the partner authorities to review the current arrangements and adopt any changes 2 years before the current arrangement expires.	No	Executive			Sean Murphy	Open
6 Nov 2025	Annual Report of the Shared Building Control Service	To provide and update on the performance of the shared building control service.	No	Executive			Sean Murphy	Open
6 Nov 2025	Standing item:		No	Executive			Richard	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
	Asset Disposal						Turner	
6 Nov 2025	Children's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Task Group Recommendations		No	Executive			Steven Bow	Open
6 Nov 2025	The Enforcement Plan		Yes	Executive			Laura Callan	Open
18 Dec 2025	2025/26 Performance Report Q2		No	Executive			Beatriz Teixeira	Open
18 Dec 2025	Standing item: Asset Disposal		No	Executive			Richard Turner	Open
12 Feb 2026	Investment and Borrowing Strategy 2026-27		Yes	Executive			Shail Vitish	Open
12 Feb 2026	Medium Term		Yes	Executive			Shail Vitish	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
	Financial Strategy 2026/27							
12 Feb 2026	Revenue Budget 2026/27		Yes	Executive			Elizabeth Griffiths	Open
12 Feb 2026	Quarterly Financial Performance Report - Q3 of 2025/26	To report on the financial performance of the Council's revenue budgets and provide a year-end forecast.	Yes	Executive			Toby Bradley	Open
12 Feb 2026	Capital Budget 2026/27		Yes	Executive			Richard Quayle	Open
12 Feb 2026	Playing Pitch Strategy		Yes	Executive			Jude Thomas	Open
12 Feb 2026	Henwick Worthy Masterplan		Yes	Executive			Jude Thomas	Open

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Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

Item	Scrutiny Theme	Purpose	Lead Officer	Portfolio Holder/ Lead Member	Pre or post decision?
04 December 2025					
Development of Family Hubs & The Early Help Offer in West Berkshire	Corporate Effectiveness	To explain how Family Hubs and the Early Help Officer is developing in West Berkshire	Dave Wraight	Cllr Heather Codling (Children and Family Services)	CYPSC Decision
Educational Attendance, Attainment and Outcomes	Corporate Effectiveness	To provide an update on educational attendance, attainment and outcomes for children in West Berkshire and how the Council is seeking to improve performance in these areas.	Neil Goddard	Cllr Heather Codling (Children and Family Services)	CYPSC Decision
Ofsted Inspections	Partnership Effectiveness	To provide an update on the latest Ofsted inspection reports for schools in West Berkshire, and changes to the Ofsted school inspection regime that came into effect in November 2025.	Neil Goddard	Cllr Heather Codling (Children and Family Services)	CYPSC Decision
Ofsted Children's Social Care Inspection	Corporate Effectiveness	To present the results of the Ofsted Children's Social Care Inspection	Rebecca Wilshire	Cllr Heather Codling (Children and Family Services)	CYPSC Decision
03 March 2025					
Exclusions	Corporate Effectiveness	To present the latest trends on permanent exclusions and the work that is being done to prevent these and get excluded pupils back into education.	Neil Goddard	Cllr Heather Codling (Children and Family Services)	CYPSC Decision

Items to be programmed:

- Youth Services
- Wraparound Care
- Attendance Strategy
- Exclusions
- Youth Council

Council Strategy Priorities

- Priority Area 1: Services We Are Proud Of
- Priority Area 2: A Fairer West Berkshire with Opportunities for All
- Priority Area 3: Tackling the Climate and Ecological Emergency
- Priority Area 4: A Prosperous and Resilient West Berkshire

Scrutiny Themes

- Policy Effectiveness
- Corporate Effectiveness
- Partnership Effectiveness

Last updated:

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