

Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 24 October 2023

12:30

Oak Room, County Buildings, Stafford

The meeting will be webcast live and archived for 12 months. It can be viewed at the following link: <https://staffordshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

John Tradewell
Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Corporate Services
16 October 2023

Agenda

- 1. Apologies**
- 2. Declarations of Interest**
- 3. Minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2023** (Pages 1 - 8)
- 4. Strategic Vision for Early Years** (Pages 9 - 48)
Report of the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
- 5. Work Programme** (Pages 49 - 58)
- 6. Exclusion of the Public**

The Chairman to move:

“That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business which involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Schedule 12A (as amended) of the Local Government Act 1972 indicated below”.

Part Two

(All reports in this section are exempt)

Nil.

Membership	
Gill Burnett-Faulkner (Vice-Chair (Overview))	Kath Perry, MBE
Janet Eagland	Paul Snape (Vice-Chair (Scrutiny))
Ann Edgeller	Bob Spencer (Chair)
Johnny McMahon	Mike Wilcox
Gillian Pardesi	Conor Wileman

Notes for Members of the Press and Public

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Recording by Press and Public

Recording (including by the use of social media) by the Press and Public is permitted from the public seating area provided it does not, in the opinion of the chairman, disrupt the meeting.

Minutes of the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 14 September 2023

Present: Bob Spencer (Chair)

Attendance	
Gill Burnett-Faulkner (Vice-Chair (Overview))	Johnny McMahon
Janet Eagland	Kath Perry, MBE
Ann Edgeller	Mike Wilcox

Also in attendance: Mark Sutton

Apologies: Gillian Pardesi, Paul Snape and Conor Wileman

Part One

12. Declarations of Interest

There were none on this occasion.

13. Minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2023

Resolved: That the minutes of the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 27 July 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

14. Impact of Cabinet Investment in Children's Services

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People introduced a presentation on the impact of the Cabinet investment in Children's Services.

Members received a breakdown of spend and details of a timeline for all recruitment activity, most of which had been completed by the end of July. The exception to this was the additional challenges around new social work posts where, rather than just wishing to uplift the current posts, there was work towards addressing two additional problems: having enough staff to meet workload needs; and to find a longer-term solution to making Staffordshire the Authority of choice for social workers. Part of the identified solution was to establish excellent training and development alongside a progression mechanism to enable Staffordshire not only to grow their own social workers, but also to retain them. Consultation with staff and the Trade Unions around these developments finished this week and it was expected that recruitment to these new posts would start from October.

Members also heard that last year an investment into residential care staff had been identified to help support the high numbers of children and young people coming into residential care. This investment supported Staffordshire in being competitive within the market, helping recruitment and retention of staff and to future proof Staffordshire's residential service. This was particularly important because of the increase in complexity of need of those requiring residential care. A decision had therefore been taken to look again at planning within this service area resulting in a delay with this investment. It was expected that business cases would be shared with Members later this year.

Cabinet's investment had reflected well with both DfE and Ofsted, clearly showing the service aspirations and the support from the political leadership. This had helped to influence Staffordshire being chosen by the DfE to take part in two pilot projects, with two further bids currently being considered. There had also been DfE support for the progress made around the Accelerate Progress Plan (APP) for SEND.

Staff stability and morale had seen a significant improvement, being more positive and more solution focused, as evidenced in both staff retention as well as through results from the employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS). The additional 1.5 social work posts had added capacity to district teams to support children and families. Improvements made had resulted in some district teams stabilising for the first time, eg Cannock. Members were also pleased to note that the narrative for Staffordshire had changed as a result of the investment, with more positivity amongst its staff and with increased numbers and quality of applicants where posts were advertised externally.

The Committee heard details of developments resulting from district investment, including the recruitment of deputy district leads, embedding a culture of performance and better financial management, with a focus on Early Help, Children with Disabilities and SEND. These services had been amalgamated well within the district working place-based approach and ideology from the Transformation process. All SEND key workers were now in post. Recruitment of Education Psychologists had been a challenge, but this was a challenge nationally. Three Education Psychologists had been recruited to start in September 2023. Whilst an increase in demand had meant that caseloads remained quite high, the additional capacity resulting from the investment had enabled this increase to be managed effectively.

The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service was now fully established. Whilst the average workload had gone down it was still a little higher than the ideal number. However, a reduction in the number of children on Child Protection (CP) plans, and hopefully reducing the number

of children in care moving forward, should help bring caseloads more in line with ideal figures by the end of this financial year. An important part of the IRO role was to look at managing risks and closing CP plans with efficacy and in a timely manner.

Staff recruitment to central service roles had been completed, with all staff now onboarded. A new strategic operational governance process was being developed. Improvements were also being developed around Missing children and those vulnerable to child exploitation. This included increasing the number of staff to ensure the challenge of exploitation could be more effectively tackled. Working with partners was key to this area of work, with more effective partnership working with the Police and the harm reduction hubs to create an effective level of support for those young people who were vulnerable to exploitation.

A Quality Assurance (QA) Officer, along with commissioning support, had been recruited. This would enable a more balanced workload and oversight of the quality of placements as well as embedding timely processing of contracts and re-commissioning. QA officers also helped to work with providers to ensure safeguards were in place for the complex needs of children in residential care, enabling better collaborative relationships with providers, helping to de-escalate challenging situations and avoid providers refusing young people with complex needs.

Details of the average applications per vacancy by district showed South Staffordshire appeared to have a reduced number of vacancies from the previous year. Members queried the reasons for this. South Staffordshire was a stable district dealing, in general, with less complex needs. The reason for this may be due to there being less vacancies.

Members discussed the balance between progression planning and internal recruitment that enabled the best candidates for any post to be appointed. Discussion also centred around cultural change and how this was managed. The Committee were informed that many staff were lost during the Transformation process. However, a number had now returned. Opportunities for staff progression helped support retention, though any appointment was equitable with high challenge, high support and high standards. Posts would be advertised externally where there were no suitable internal candidates.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee welcomed the presentation, and particularly the frank and insightful nature of the question responses. The manner in which areas of improvement had been identified and investment targeted was supported and Members felt progress was encouraging.

Resolved: That the Cabinet Member and Officers be congratulated on the

improvements made through the effective targeted use of the Cabinet investment to date.

15. Children in Care Programme Update

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People introduced a presentation on the Children in Care Programme. He shared with Members that the number of children in care in Staffordshire was relatively high. This included a significant rise in the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC), a rise from 40 to 104 over a short period of time. The County Council had little control over the numbers of UASC. Work was being developed to influence the number of children in care who were not UASC through the Children in Care Programme. This programme looked to ensure the best outcome for children and young people, enabling them to stay within their families wherever possible. The Cabinet Member also shared his aspiration to develop initiatives that prevented private residential care providers driving up placement costs.

The Children in Care Programme had been a priority for some time but was consolidated in its approach in October 2022 to help reach its ambitions and targets. The establishment of the Children in Care Programme Board created the right vehicle for constant planning, monitoring and problem solving.

The Programme had three key priorities:

- reducing the number of children that come into the care system;
- increasing the number of children exiting the care system;
- reducing the consequent overspend on the placement budget.

These priorities were shared with front line staff explaining that keeping children in the care system was, in the vast majority of cases, not in their best interests as once the young person became 18, the care was removed and they were often ill prepared to take care of themselves. Remaining within their community and learning a resilience and understanding of the realities of that community prepared them better for their future adulthood. It was therefore understood that exiting children from care as early as possible, or keeping children out of care completely, where safe to do so, resulted in better long-term outcomes. This approach looked constantly at how to mitigate and manage risks within the community rather than a risk averse approach that took the child into care until they were 18.

Members received details of the programme's short-term successes, including: a reduction in the number of children coming into care between April to June 2023 compared with January to March 2023; 16 young people moving out of residential placements from July; and children being identified for exit from the care system through the Discharge Planning Team.

The newly established Discharge Planning Team will create capacity for the IRO service and social work staff. The Committee also received details of the priority given to the Children in Care programme and staff and key partner engagement. More emphasis had also been placed on the Restorative Practice model, with greater challenge and support.

Challenges in implementing the Programme were shared with Members. These included working with partner organisations, as well as the Judiciary and Cafcass, where reduction of children coming into the care system may not be their shared priority. In these instances, greater challenge was given and risks mitigated to support children remaining in the community. Further challenges were around: placement sufficiency and response to trauma; cost of care and inflation; high levels of interdependencies with other projects within Children and Families; risk averse systems; and challenges in community resources and resilience.

Details of the Programme's priorities and progress were shared with the Committee, specifically with:

- the Discharge Planning Team
- residential mapping
- an improved reunification support offer
- a review of edge of care services
- improved practice in IRO services
- culture change around children in care

The Committee also received details of the timeline for delivery and anticipated impact.

Members asked how the number of UASC were managed and specifically how they were supported in attaining functional English language. Prior to October 2022 there was a planned and centrally coordinated placement of UASC across all local authorities. Since 2022 the landscape had changed, with asylum seekers accommodated in hotels, and with some of these claiming to be children under 18 years. There was no opportunity for local authorities to plan for such placements, however, once it had been established that an individual was under 18 the local authority had a duty of care for them. If their asylum status remained unresolved, they stayed in the care system until the age of 21. Providing enough language support was difficult, especially with the numbers and range of languages involved. An initial solution to this was the use of specialist headphones that translated between languages. Joined up working across teams took place to help resolve issues, including with education providers as well as supportive work with the Police. Work through local hubs looked to provide support and to reduce trauma.

The Committee were heartened by the exit from care strategies but understood that for a small group of children and young people residential

care would remain the best option. Resilience was key to enabling young people to achieve independence and Members asked what work was in place to support building this resilience. Details of the House Project were shared. This was a new initiative which enabled a group of ten children aged 17 to live together in a shared house during their last year of care, learning key life skills and building life-long links that would help support their move to independence.

On querying what checks were in place to ensure that children who were returned to their families remained safe, Members were informed that any reunification took place over a 40-week period, with planned support developed during this time. Any exit from care had to go through the Court process which involved a lot of checks and balances to ensure it was a safe decision.

The Committee asked what mental health support was in place for children in care and those leaving care. The mental health support available was around a very medical model, however supporting the wider mental wellbeing required a different broader approach. Work was underway with the Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust to consider how this gap between services could be filled. There was a need to look at how trauma could be better addressed. District Leads were also now developing better working relationships with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

Concerns around the cost of residential care were discussed, with a suggestion that building local authority owned homes could be a way forward. The Committee were informed that business cases were currently being considered to develop county owned residential children's care homes. Whilst this was not necessarily a cheaper form of care, it ensured the right standard of care and should also help to change the marketplace and reduce the costs of private providers.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and Officer for their frank and inciteful presentation and the problem-solving approach so clearly being followed.

Resolved: That the developments through the Children in Care programme be welcomed and supported.

16. Work Programme

An extra meeting had been added to the Committee's work programme to

start at 12.30pm on 24 October prior to their informal meeting with the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (the Commissioner). This was a one item only agenda to scrutinise the Early Years Strategy prior to its consideration at Cabinet on 15 November.

Members had requested a pre-meeting in preparation for their meeting with the Commissioner. This had been arranged for Monday 16 October at 3.00pm via Teams.

Resolved: That the amendments to the work programme be agreed.

Chair

Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday 24 October 2023

Strategic Vision for Early Years

Recommendations

I recommend that the Committee:

Considers and comments on the proposals that Cabinet should:

- a. Endorse the strategic vision for the early years' service and acknowledge the contribution this will make to Staffordshire's Strategic Plan.
- b. Endorse the principles for the proposed reorganisation of the Early Years Service delivery model detailed within this report and agree support for Officers to further develop this model with staff and stakeholders.
- c. Delegate authority to the Director for Children's Services in consultation with the lead member for Children and Young People and lead member for Education and SEND to approve the final staffing structure for the service.
- d. Endorse the planned budget profile for the Early Years Service and investment in new areas of delivery.

Local Member Interest:

N/A

Report of Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Summary

What is the Overview and Scrutiny Committee being asked to do and why?

1. This report provides an update on National and local changes that are planned or have changed the way we work in Staffordshire. It seeks to explain how these changes require a new approach and as such proposes to review the structure of the Early Years Service within Staffordshire County Council following the transfer of the team from Entrust.
2. The proposal will improve outcomes for children and families through a more efficient, joined up and holistic services for our youngest children and their families so that they can:

- a. maximise their take up of provision
 - b. have timely access to high quality early education and childcare provision
3. We will do this by ensuring that the team design and delivery is integrated into the Family Hub model so that we continue to build on this as the integrated access to Early Help services and support.
 4. The Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider and comment on the Strategic Vision for Early Years.
 5. The Strategic Vision is due to be considered by Cabinet at their meeting of 15 November. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee's comments and feedback will be shared with Cabinet prior to their decision on the recommendations within the report (attached).

Report

Background

6. We are a hugely ambitious county. We know that investing in the child's earliest years can pave the way for their future. A good start in life is likely to lead to better outcomes into adulthood. In recent years developments nationally have focussed on supporting parents with affordable childcare to enable more people to work, yet this is also an opportunity to ensure that children in their earliest years have access to high quality play and learning experiences that pave the way for later life. The attached Cabinet paper sets out how we plan to achieve this.

Link to Strategic Plan

7. See attached Cabinet Report.

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

8. See attached Cabinet Report.

Community Impact

9. See attached Cabinet Report.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Cabinet Report

Appendix 2 - Early Education Entitlements and Funding Update: March 2023: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-education-entitlements-and-funding/early-education-entitlements-and-funding-update-march-2023>

Appendix 3 - Chancellor unveils a Budget for growth
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-unveils-a-budget-for-growth>

Appendix 4 - Early Years Funding – Extension of the Entitlements
<https://consult.education.gov.uk/funding-policy-unit/early-years-funding-extension-of-the-entitlements/>

Appendix 5 - [Main findings: Childcare providers and inspections as at 31 March 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Appendix 6 - [Education recovery in early years providers: summer 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Appendix 7 - [Special educational needs in England, Academic year 2022/23 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](#)

[Appendix 8 - The Best Start in Life: a vision for the 1,001 critical days](#)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-best-start-for-life-a-vision-for-the-1001-critical-days>

[Appendix 9 - Setting Closures in Staffordshire](#)

[Appendix 10 - Recruitment and Retention Challenges in Staffordshire](#)

[Appendix 11 - http://www.comms2point0unawards.co.uk/the-winners](http://www.comms2point0unawards.co.uk/the-winners)

Appendix 12 - <https://www.cypnow.co.uk/best%20practice/article/digital-campaign-boosts-language-outcomes>

[Appendix 13 - Extended Entitlements roll out dates](#)

[Community Impact Assessment](#)

Contact Details

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Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 15 November 2023

Strategic Vision for Early Years



Councillor Mark Sutton, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People said,

“Insert quote agreed with relevant Cabinet Member(s) and Communications Team. Contact Paula Wright or Paul Dutton for assistance.”

Report Summary:

This report provides an update on National and local changes that are planned or have changed the way we work in Staffordshire. It seeks to explain how these changes require a new approach and as such proposes to review the structure of the Early Years Service within Staffordshire County Council following the transfer of the team from Entrust.

The proposal will improve outcomes for children and families through a more efficient, joined up and holistic services for our youngest children and their families so that they can:

- a. maximise their take up of provision
- b. have timely access to high quality early education and childcare provision

We will do this by ensuring that the team design and delivery is integrated into the Family Hub model so that we continue to build on this as the integrated access to Early Help services and support.

Recommendations

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Endorse the strategic vision for the early years' service and acknowledge the contribution this will make to Staffordshire's Strategic Plan.
- b. Endorse the principles for the proposed reorganisation of the Early Years Service delivery model detailed within this report and agree support for Officers to further develop this model with staff and stakeholders.
- c. Delegate authority to the Director for Children's Services in consultation with the lead member for Children and Young People and lead member for Education and SEND to approve the final staffing structure for the service.
- d. Endorse the planned budget profile for the Early Years Service and investment in new areas of delivery.

Cabinet – Wednesday 15 November 2023

Strategic Vision for Early Years

Recommendations of the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Endorse the strategic vision for the Early Years Service and acknowledge the contribution this will make to Staffordshire’s Strategic Plan.
- b. Endorse the principles for the proposed reorganisation of the Early Years Service delivery model detailed within this report and agree support for Officers to further develop this model with staff and stakeholders.
- c. Delegate authority to the Director for Children’s Services in consultation with the lead member for Children and Young People and lead member for Education and SEND to approve the final staffing structure for the service.
- d. Endorse the planned budget profile for the Early Years Service and investment in new areas of delivery.

Local Member Interest:

N/A

Report of the Director for Children and Families

Reasons for Recommendations:

1. We are a hugely ambitious county. We know that investing in the child’s earliest years can pave the way for their future. A good start in life is likely to lead to better outcomes into adulthood. In recent years developments nationally have focussed on supporting parents with affordable childcare to enable more people to work, yet this is also an opportunity to ensure that children in their earliest years have access to high quality play and learning experiences that pave the way for later life. This paper sets out how we plan to achieve this.

National Context

Extended Childcare Entitlements:

2. In the spring budget, the Chancellor announced transformative reforms to childcare for parents, children and the economy. This investment will provide additional funded hours for childcare, helping working families with their childcare costs and empowering them to progress their careers and support their families.
3. The new entitlements will be introduced in phases. The Government will soon be funding up to 80% of all childcare places in England, up from 50% before the spring budget. The biggest change is the extension of the subsidised 30-hours entitlement from 3-and 4-year-olds down to 9-month-olds. (Appendix A)
4. In March 2023 the Chancellor also announced a national wraparound childcare scheme providing schools and local authorities with funding to support the set-up of wraparound provision for primary school children from September 2024. (Appendix B)
5. In July 2023, the Government launched a funding consultation on the approach to funding 2-year-olds and under from 2024-25. This consultation sets out the proposed new funding formula for calculating local authority hourly funding rates for the entitlements for 2-year-olds and under from April 2024. It also details the local funding rules proposed for local authorities to follow when passing on this funding to providers. The outcome of this consultation will not be known until the autumn term 2023. (Appendix C)
6. Whilst these announcements are welcome, they are on the backdrop of a market that was already struggling to be sustainable. This is due a variety of reasons including:
 - a. National changes to pensions and the living wage
 - b. Funding rates
 - c. Rising costs of running businesses, including rent, energy costs and consumables
 - d. Staff shortages
 - e. Increasing costs for childcare and parents working more flexibly

Some providers have needed to subsidise the overall costs with fees and top up fees for privately paying children.
7. Nationally, numbers of Ofsted registered providers have fallen by 7% during the period March 2022 to March 2023. (Appendix D)

Education Recovery in Early Years:

8. Ofsted's 2022 report on Education Recovery in Early Years Provision found that the pandemic continues to affect young children's communication, social, emotional and physical development, as well as reducing independence and self-care skills. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds have been particularly affected by this. (Appendix E)
9. The number of children diagnosed with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) has continued to rise in recent years. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of children diagnosed with developmental delays and speech and language difficulties continues to rise. (Appendix F)

1001 Critical Days:

10. The Best Start for Life Review: vision for the 1,001 Critical Days has outlined a programme of work to ensure the best support during these crucial first 1001 days, setting the foundation for babies to maximise their potential for lifelong emotional and physical wellbeing. (Appendix G)

Local Context

Staffordshire Strategic Plan:

11. Our Staffordshire Strategic Plan for 2022-26 outlines our ambitions and priorities for the years ahead.



Vision: An innovative, ambitious and sustainable county, where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy

Outcomes	Priorities	How we work
<p>Everyone in Staffordshire will:</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>Have access to more good jobs and share the benefits of economic growth</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>Live in thriving and sustainable communities</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>Be healthier and independent for longer</p> </div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>Support Staffordshire's economy to grow, generating more and better-paid jobs</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>Tackle climate change, enhance our environment, and make Staffordshire more sustainable</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>Encourage good health and wellbeing, resilience and independence</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>Fix more roads, and improve transport and digital connections</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>Offer every Staffordshire child and young person the best start in life, and the chance to achieve their potential</p> </div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>Encourage our communities to help themselves and each other</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>Lead our workforce to be ambitious, courageous and empowered</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;">  <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>Use digital technology and data to connect, inform and support the people of Staffordshire</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p>Engage and listen to our communities, partners and business, working together to improve our county</p> </div> </div>

Pledge: Live within our means and deliver value for money

12. Figure 1 – Outcomes and Priorities: SCC Strategic Plan

13. Our ambition is for every child in Staffordshire, whatever their background, to have the opportunity to have the best start in life. High quality early education is proven to have a positive impact on children's outcomes in both the short and long term. We will continue to work in partnership with our early years settings to make positive differences for all children and families.

14. To deliver this vision and respond to changing national and local agendas we need to fundamentally review how we deliver our services. This includes our priorities, the ways we work collaboratively and our team functions, values and systems so that we are able to:

- a. Directly contribute to related local authority strategies such as safeguarding, inclusion, health and well-being and education through a preventative approach.
- b. Connect to other service priorities through the Family Hub model and support the first 1001 days of life, ensuring children are school ready and able to thrive and that any emerging issues are identified, and appropriate support is put in place at the earliest opportunity.
- c. Provide more connected support, including advice and information to parents about the ways in which the early years offers are changing and signposting to services within communities that will support them in managing the complex early years of their child's life.
- d. Ensure the transformative reforms announced in the Spring budget are realised through the successful implementation of the extended entitlements, balancing the need to create additional childcare places with ensuring children get high quality experiences by attending settings that are rated good or outstanding by Ofsted.
- e. Carry out a significant range of market management activities, including data analysis, consultant support for individual and groups of settings, business modelling and premises suitability to maximise sufficiency and sustainability across all sector types including childminders. This will enable eligible working families to access the right childcare provision, in the right place at the right time.
- f. Provide support and challenge to early years settings, ensuring they continue to strive to improve outcomes and reduce inequalities for children across all areas of learning, through a range of early intervention strategies, programmes and projects that raise expertise across the sector workforce and lead to closing gaps in performance.
- g. We support our service families by regularly attending the Ministry of Defence Local Authority Partnership group which helps keep us informed of national priorities. We have established links at the two barracks in Staffordshire with Community Development Officers and

intend to strengthen these links, ensuring all families are well informed about the newly announced childcare entitlements.

- h. Play a crucial role in the implementation and embedding of the new early help plan and the identification and support for children with development delay and SEND.

Delivery Model:

15. The Early Years Service is newly formed with 14 members of staff moving from Entrust via TUPE transfer to join the existing Early Education and Childcare Team.
16. The existing Entrust team structure is 'flat' with broadly defined roles for line management responsibility and significantly reduced resilience at a time when the need for these services has increased.
17. Job roles, responsibilities and accountabilities do not reflect the national and local context in which the team needs to operate. There is an opportunity to integrate the two teams to provide an overarching Early Years Team.
18. There is a need to review the purpose for the newly formed team, its functions, accountabilities, values and systems and how it fully supports the outcomes and priorities in the Staffordshire Strategic Plan.
19. We want to make a commitment to change the way we currently deliver services to early years settings, families and children. We can provide a more connected more place-based approach, through greater partnership working so that our support for settings, children and families is more streamlined and effective.
20. We recognise the important role we play in supporting early years settings to be inclusive, identifying any additional need and making provision effective for children at the earliest point. We know that more children and families could benefit, and long-term outcomes could be improved if we have more opportunities and capacity to support early years settings to develop inclusive practices and ensure families are provided with the right help, at the right time, in the right place.
21. We understand the significant expansion of the recently announced early years entitlements and the vital role childcare plays in enabling parents to work or take on new opportunities; it is more important than ever that we get the delivery model right. We know there will be more families requiring childcare places and therefore ensuring we plan effectively and develop team capacity to create sufficient high-quality places is central to our purpose and the success of the extended new offer for families.

Our Values

22. Staffordshire County Councils People Strategy puts at its heart the values we want for our organisation. These values are central to the way in which we want staff within the Early Years Service to work.
23. We recognise this will require personal ambition, courage and empowerment to deliver this for the youngest children in our county who need us to be ambitious about their futures, have the courage to take action to diminish the differences they experience and provide opportunities for them to play and learn in their earliest years and for their parents to also access more and better jobs knowing that their children have high quality childcare.

Our Principles

24. Our principles underpin those already identified in Staffordshire's Children and Families system:
- a. A child centred service that is committed to doing what works best for our children and settings and is informed by their views.
 - b. Restorative approaches that help create a positive team culture and mirror the types of interactions staff should have with colleagues, partners, settings, children and families.
 - c. Strong team leadership, which supports our Councils aim to be an 'excellent employer with a welcoming culture, in which people live and breathe our values'. A strengths-based attitude by leaders who prioritise quality of practice and outcomes and who have ambitions to help the team develop, alongside a genuine interest in their work and practice.
 - d. A skilled, flexible and agile team who have clear accountabilities and responsibilities and are able to rapidly adjust to changing needs.
 - e. A commitment to continuous service improvement through the identification of team plans and indicators with clear reporting mechanisms that support the priorities of the Early Years Advisory Board who also oversee and monitor progress of agreed priorities.

Our Response

25. We have worked rapidly to plan and prepare for the expansion of the funded entitlements and wrap around provision. The short time frame from announcement to implementation has required people to work at pace to mobilise this. The council is already working quickly to prepare and plan for the extended entitlements through the use of short-term

arrangements but recognises the need to build future capacity to ensure the ambitions of the project are realised.

26. Ofsted commended Staffordshire, who have not seen the rate of setting closures of other Local Authorities in the region. We know that we provide good support to the market, however we need to maintain this aspect and grow it to ensure that we can mitigate and respond to the rising number of closures due to the challenging market locally. (Appendix H)
27. We have developed a range of support for the sector through quality support, professional development opportunities and partnership working with The Careers Hub and colleges to promote early years as a career of choice and encourage students to access relevant courses. The Early Years Service continues to provide high-quality support, training and mentoring to an increasing number of settings who have new or inexperienced teams and leaders, ensuring high quality practice is maintained so that Staffordshire children can benefit.
28. We plan to maintain and develop this offer through the revised structure and support settings and families to provide high quality early learning experiences that provide the foundations for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up.
29. Settings have reported an increase in numbers of children with developmental delay and SEN. This is reflected in the significant increase in the number of children who are referred to Early Years Forum, rising from 600 children in 2019 to 1020 children in 2023. To meet this increasing demand, the team have developed a risk management plan.
30. We now need to build capacity, enabling the team to be proactive and focus on early intervention more broadly, ensuring strategies and projects are maximised to ensure all children get the early support they need to prepare for happy and healthy adulthoods.
31. Referrals to Speech and Language Therapy services continue to rise. Midlands Partnership Trust have identified that currently there are 6398 children within the service and that many of these children need access to socialisation and language stimulating environments, rather than specialist services. To address these emerging patterns, we need to continue to prioritise and build on the highly our highly successful speech and language projects.
32. Staffordshire were one of 14 local authorities who delivered a pilot scheme on behalf of the DfE called 'The Early Outcomes Fund', this sought to invest in early childhood development. Two investment areas for this project were 'Hungry Little Minds' and 'Early Communication

Screening’ both of which have been incredibly successful having won national awards and featured in Nursery World and Children and Young People Now publications. (Appendix J) We plan to maintain and develop these two schemes using the current funding allocation so that the benefits can be maximised across the county.

- a. Hungry Little Minds is digital campaign for parents of children aged 0-2 supporting parents to chat, read and play with their babies. The take up for the campaign has exceeded all planned targets and feedback from families is extremely positive. As a result, this project will be sustained through the planned budget profile and the content will be updated to reflect feedback from families, the aims of the 1001 critical days and changing local contexts and priorities.
 - b. Early Communication Screening is a tool provided by Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. The tool supports early years practitioners to identify speech, language and communication needs at the earliest opportunity. This programme has been highly successful; our impact analysis data shows the significant progress that children make following early identification and intervention (figure 2). As a result, this project will be sustained through the planned budget profile enabling the delivery of training and provision of practitioner resources to sustain the longevity of this evidence-based programme.
33. This investment will help us to reduce referrals to speech and language services and improve outcomes for children with development delay and SEND.
34. The Family Hubs are delivering against the Early Help Strategy to provide families with the support they need. The Early Years Service needs to be central to this delivery and is committed to playing a key role in supporting the many ways in which early help can be provided for families.

Our Engagement

35. The Early Years Team have been engaged in the development of this proposed model. The main themes from the engagement are that staff:
- a. Recognise the need to review the Early Years Service delivery model to support the shared vision and priorities outlined in the Staffordshire Strategic Plan, to achieve better outcomes for children and families.
 - b. Recognise there has been a consistent reduction in team capacity over the last five years while the team have been within Entrust. A key priority is to now align and build team capacity to address the current

- requirements from Government and to support the challenges faced by the early years sector.
- c. Acknowledge that working towards a more holistic, place-based approach is key to ensure connection with other service and understanding the local needs of our settings and families.
 - d. Identify that the development of a service with new and challenging priorities will require opportunities for greater peer support, training and professional development.
36. Our Early Years Reference Group, which includes owners and managers from early years settings across Staffordshire have identified that there are:
- a. Higher numbers of children who have speech and language delay
 - b. Higher numbers of children with SEND needs who need support and referrals to early years forum
37. Our plans to develop team capacity, longevity of successful projects and our collaborative work through the Family Hubs will ensure a more timely, holistic approach to support.

Our Performance

38. We are proud of our work in the Early Years Service and know we are in a good position to review the way that we deliver services to realise our ambition to be the best that we can be. We have built and sustained effective relationships with our early years sector, the Department for Education and Ofsted and use these to respond more effectively to need and to strengthen the quality of our practice.
39. We lead Staffordshire's Best Start Plan, building relationships and working towards goals to help all Staffordshire children to be happy and healthy, feel safe and belong and enjoy and achieve.
40. We have a range of data collections within the service that are used to measure the impact of our work and to identify service priorities. However, we intend to continually improve our data and intelligence and reporting by developing a service dashboard which will more accurately illustrate the impact of our work, identify areas of strength and those areas that require further development.
41. We use data and intelligence to prioritise support for our early years settings, this ensures our support is targeted and prioritised according to need.

Early Years Performance



97% of settings are rated
Good or Outstanding by Ofsted



100% of settings rated Requires
Improvement or Inadequate by Ofsted
improved in their next inspection



67.5% of children reached a
good level of development at the
end of Reception - higher than the
national average



99% return rate from providers
of sufficiency survey allows

Our **speech and language programme** has been recognised by the Department for Education and Ofsted as a successful model with impressive impact data.



Children who had language within normal range 50% in September 2021 to 67% in July 2022



Children who had moderate delay 36% in September 2021 to 26% in July 2022



Children who had significant delay 14% in September 2021 to 8% in July 2022

42. Figure 2 Early Years Performance, August 2023

Legal Implications

43. The Early Years Service has statutory responsibilities aligned to the Childcare Act 2006 and 2016 and are specific to:

- a. providing information, advice and guidance for families including supporting them to access high quality childcare places.
- b. monitoring the early years childcare market to ensure sufficient childcare places are available for families.
- c. ensuring eligible families have access to the funded entitlements for 2, 3 and 4 year and are provided with information on childcare costs.
- d. establishing the Early Years Foundation Stage framework through high quality information, advice and guidance to the early years sector.
- e. ensuring that all providers have regard to the SEN Code of Practice to meet the needs of children with disabilities or SEN.

44. In the event this requires additional legal input this will be requested as soon as possible to enable any additional legal resourcing and support to be considered.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

45. To ensure our statutory duties are discharged effectively the Local Authority centrally retains expenditure from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), this is limited to 5% of 3- and 4-year-old funding and is agreed by Schools Forum annually. This 5% is planned to be extended to include the newly announced childcare entitlements for two-year-olds and under in line with the planned roll out dates. (Appendix K)

46. This grant funds all support services for settings who receive early education funding. The Early Years Service is funded through the DSG, including £300,000 from the high needs block. The amount available is: £1,827,350.

47. There is no additional financial input requested as part of this report.

48. The proposal will be delivered within the existing financial envelope and developed further as funding from the Department for Education increases. Details of the initial proposal have been costed (subject to change) within the existing budget.

49. The Department for Education are currently consulting on the way entitlement funding will be distributed from April 2024. As a result, any recommendations in this report assume that the early years budget for 24/25 remains in line with current allocations and if this increases, we will profile the resources in line with this paper.

	Staffing £	Non Staffing £	Total £
Management & Administration	167,000	3,000	170,000
Funding, Sufficiency and Market Development	537,000	52,000	589,000
Safeguarding, Quality and Workforce Development	449,000	52,000	501,000
SEND, Inclusion and Early Intervention	468,000	52,000	520,000
Early Years Outcomes Fund	-	20,000	20,000
Hungry Little Minds Campaign	-	27,000	27,000
	1,621,000	206,000	1,827,000

50. Any additional grants received from the Department for Education for local authority resource allocation will be used to scale up developments that ensure the ambitions in this report are realised.

Risks and Issues

51. For 24/25 the Early Years Supplementary Grant will be rolled into the DSG funding. However, for 2-year-olds as the formula is due to change for how LAs receive their allocation (10.5% driven by Additional Needs Factors), this has reduced how much funding Staffordshire receive. The proposed new rate for Staffordshire is £7.55; this is what Staffordshire currently pay to providers, therefore, to create an additional centrally retained fund from this rate would require a cut to the provider rate, meaning it would be extremely challenging to retain any additional, centrally retained funding from our 2-year-old budget.
52. The time frame from the extended entitlement budget announcements to implementation is very short, meaning the team is currently required to work at pace without the release of Government funding for additional capacity.
53. The low funding rate Staffordshire receives exacerbates the national picture of setting sustainability, recruitment and retention (Appendix I). We try to mitigate this by the high-quality consultancy support we provide. However, these challenges continue it makes our sufficiency duties more difficult to fulfil.
54. In 23/24 for 3- and 4-year-old funding Staffordshire remained on the funding floor before the allocation of early years supplementary grant (EYSG).
55. The illustrative modelling published as part of the most recent Government consultation suggests that Staffordshire is one of the 40 local authorities who are likely to see a lower 2-year-old rate in 2024-25, if this rate is compared with our effective combined 2-year-old rate from September 2023, which included the additional funding being provided to local authorities through the early years supplementary grant (EYSG).

Climate Change Implications

56. Although there are no direct climate change implications because of the recommendations set out within this report, it is recognised that there will be indirect impacts, for example, travel to early years settings. Where possible Team Managers will work to reduce these impacts as part of the wider commitment to tackling Climate Change by:
 - a. A more placed based approach and integration with the Family Hubs to limit the travelling distance for consultants. Minimising the need to travel long distances, when possible, will contribute to Staffordshire's transport carbon impact.

- b. Raising provider awareness of the advantages of using premises with high energy efficiency
- c. Promote the advantages of EV travel where possible.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Early Education Entitlements and Funding Update: March 2023: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-education-entitlements-and-funding/early-education-entitlements-and-funding-update-march-2023>

Appendix 2 - Chancellor unveils a Budget for growth
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-unveils-a-budget-for-growth>

Appendix 3 - Early Years Funding – Extension of the Entitlements
<https://consult.education.gov.uk/funding-policy-unit/early-years-funding-extension-of-the-entitlements/>

Appendix 4 - [Main findings: Childcare providers and inspections as at 31 March 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Appendix 5 - [Education recovery in early years providers: summer 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Appendix 6 - [Special educational needs in England, Academic year 2022/23 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Appendix 7 - The Best Start in Life: a vision for the 1,001 critical days
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-best-start-for-life-a-vision-for-the-1001-critical-days>

Appendix 8 - Setting Closures in Staffordshire

Appendix 9 - Recruitment and Retention Challenges in Staffordshire

Appendix 10 - <http://www.comms2point0unawards.co.uk/the-winners>

Appendix 11 - <https://www.cypnow.co.uk/best%20practice/article/digital-campaign-boosts-language-outcomes>

Appendix 12 - Extended Entitlements roll out dates

Community Impact Assessment

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Appendix 8 – Setting Closures

August 2022 to July 2023

21 group-based providers closed without another provider opening on site.

	Closed without another provider opening	Ofsted rating at the time of closure					Loss of places
		Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Inadequate	Not inspected	
Cannock Chase	3	0	2	0	0	1	66
East Staffordshire	2	0	1	0	1	0	54
Lichfeld	2	0	0	1	1	0	77
Newcastle-under-Lyme	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Staffordshire	5	0	4	0	0	1	192
Stafford	6	1	4	0	0	1	213
Staffordshire Moorlands	3	0	3	0	0	0	111
Tamworth	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	19	1	14	1	2	3	713

Appendix 9 – Recruitment

Providers with current staff vacancies

	No	Yes	Total number	Percentage with vacancies
Cannock Chase	43	11	54	20%
East Staffordshire	50	19	69	28%
Lichfield	43	19	62	31%
Newcastle-under-Lyme	66	12	78	15%
South Staffordshire	46	11	57	19%
Stafford	51	26	77	34%
Staffordshire Moorlands	52	12	64	19%
Tamworth	25	9	34	26%
Staffordshire	376	119	495	24%

24% of providers currently have staff vacancies with the highest levels in Lichfield and Stafford.

44% of private providers have vacancies compared with just 7% of schools.

Providers who have had to reduce the number of children they can take due to staffing issues

	No	Not yet but may have to in future	Yes, permanently	Yes, temporarily
Cannock Chase	87%	8%	2%	4%
East Staffordshire	80%	9%	0%	12%
Lichfield	73%	17%	2%	8%
Newcastle-under-Lyme	78%	6%	1%	14%
South Staffordshire	82%	4%	2%	12%
Stafford	74%	9%	4%	13%
Staffordshire Moorlands	82%	11%	0%	8%
Tamworth	73%	9%	0%	18%
Staffordshire	79%	9%	1%	11%

More than one in ten providers have had to reduce the number of children they can take due to staffing issues. Most of these are on a temporary basis.

Tamworth has the highest percentage that have reduced numbers of children with Cannock Chase the lowest.

Reasons reported for recruitment and retention difficulties

	Not enough experience	Not turning up for interview	Accepting a job and then changing mind	New starters leaving within 6 months	Not enough qualifications
Cannock Chase	31%	33%	26%	15%	37%
East Staffordshire	35%	39%	23%	14%	45%
Stichfield	42%	45%	35%	23%	52%
Newcastle-under-Lyme	24%	33%	14%	15%	37%
South Staffordshire	30%	25%	21%	14%	30%
Stafford	35%	31%	17%	13%	39%
Staffordshire Moorlands	26%	27%	21%	8%	30%
Tamworth	32%	47%	29%	12%	44%
Staffordshire	32%	34%	23%	14%	39%

In addition to not having enough applicants, many providers are finding the quality of applicants is below requirements.

62% of private providers indicated that they had had candidates not turn up for interview compared to 7% of school-based provision.

64% of private providers said candidates did not have the right qualifications compared to 14% of school-based provision.

The highest problems were within private providers with the lowest across schools.

Budget Announcement Entitlement Changes 2023-2025



*new offers for working parents

Community Impact Assessment

Proposal Title: Early Years Strategic Vision

Author: Helen Gibson

Date: 7-9-23

➤ **Equality Assessment**

Protected Characteristics	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Age - older and younger people	Through the relationship we have through The Family Hubs, locality meetings and partnership working, we can promote and launch the Governments extended childcare announcements and the benefits for families. This means we can work with partners who already have established relationships with families and know the unique characteristics of our different communities.	Partners may have limited capacity to engage with the launch events and promote the new childcare entitlements for families.	Communication strategy developed with Comms team and partners to ensure the new childcare entitlements are promoted in diverse, effective ways to engage as many partners as possible. Partner pack produced to ensure a variety of communication assets are available for a variety of audiences.
Disability - people who are living with different conditions and disabilities, such as: mental illnesses, long term conditions, Autism and other neurodiverse conditions, learning disabilities, sensory impairment and physical disabilities.			
Gender reassignment - those people in the process of transitioning from one sex to another	The benefits of childcare may be understood or valued differently across communities and individual families.	Some families may choose not to take up their childcare entitlements.	The benefits of childcare for children and families will be promoted by partners and early years settings through the Comms strategy. However, individual preferences and choices will always be respected.
Marriage & Civil Partnership - people who are married or in a civil partnership should not be treated differently at work			
Pregnancy & Maternity - women who are pregnant or who have recently had a baby, including breast feeding mothers	All families (subject to eligibility for some childcare offers) will be able to access the new childcare entitlements. This will mean more two-year-olds and under twos who have a disability will be able to access childcare places.	Due to the current recruitment challenges across the early years sector settings may have more less experienced/qualified staff and find difficulty offering the number of places required or have staff who are able to meet varied needs of children.	A successful bid has enabled the LA to be part of the evidenced based Dingley's Promise, Comic Relief Project. This will enable all early years practitioners and the children's workforce to access high quality training and support to embed high quality, inclusive practices across the County.
Race - people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins			
Religion or Belief - people with any religious or philosophical belief, including a lack of belief. A belief should affect a person's life choices or the way they live for it to be considered	See also section below Health, Well-being and Social Care section below		The EEAC team offer a brokerage service for families who may find difficulty finding a childcare place to meet their needs.
Sex - men or women			
Sexual orientation - whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes			

➤ **Workforce Assessment**

Who will be affected – consider the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
<p>Endorsing a new strategic vision for early years and the principles for a proposed reorganisation will have a potential impact on members of the newly formed Early Years Team.</p>	<p>Coproducing a new strategic vision for the team will support the team to realise the ambitions within the Staffordshire Strategic Plan.</p> <p>The team organisation, including planning for additional capacity will ensure the team can successfully respond to local and national policy, projects and initiatives.</p>	<p>The process of change may impact positively or negatively on team well-being, resilience, motivation and enthusiasm.</p> <p>The team may feel any changes have/are being designed and thought about without their input.</p>	<p>The Staffordshire strategic plan has been used as a key part of team development days to identify how our unique team supports the priorities in the plan.</p> <p>The strategic vision for early years has been co-produced with the early years team using a variety of strategies to ensure their contributions to the vision and future needs of the service are heard and valued. Feedback from the sessions has been extremely positive so far.</p> <p>Feedback from team sessions has been reflected on and responded to. A whole team resilience training day has been planned and will be delivered by the Health and Well-Being Team.</p> <p>Three team sessions have been led by the Practice Excellence Team to develop our team values and develop a team charter.</p> <p>An electronic survey has been sent to all team members to support the completion of the team stress risk assessment. The results will be</p>

Who will be affected – consider the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
			<p>collated and strategies developed with the team to support any areas identified.</p> <p>Training for all Managers on resources available to support individual and team well-being is being delivered by the Health and Well-Being Team.</p> <p>We Talk sessions are planned for all team members monthly. However, Team Leaders are available for unplanned meetings and discussions when necessary.</p> <p>The team plan which identifies current priorities is being led and developed by the team, creating a sense of ownership and inclusion.</p> <p>Continue to ensure timely and clear communication to teams.</p>

Who will be affected – consider the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
<p>Page 42</p>			
	<p>Increased capacity and development and design of team roles ensures the LA can meet their statutory duties.</p>	<p>If team capacity is not addressed, the LA may find it more challenging to meet the statutory duties.</p>	<p>Within current budget there are opportunities to increase capacity in some teams, but this will be a staged approach according to government funding. There may be ring-fenced one-off budgets from government to enhance capacity which will be utilised in line with requirements in the grant.</p>
	<p>There will be additional training opportunities and development for staff to support the team priorities and the team as a whole</p>	<p>Team members may not feel training or development opportunities are required</p>	<p>The benefits of engaging in training and developmental opportunities will be shared through team days and We Talk sessions.</p> <p>The team have been offered the opportunity to identify individual and team training needs. A CPD plan will be developed by the team in collaboration with team leaders.</p>

Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
<p>A more connected service following a more place-based approach.</p>	<p>Enables the team to reach more diverse communities, ensuring all families and partners understand the newly announced childcare entitlements (subject to eligibility) are able to support and signpost families, enabling them to access work which will support economic recovery.</p> <p>For children of families subject to income eligibility criteria early access to high quality childcare provision and links to support services in districts will provide pathways to improved outcomes.</p>	<p>Relationships and connections in two newly formed services are not securely embedded.</p> <p>Families may not recognise the benefits of childcare or choose to make alternative arrangements.</p>	<p>Family Hub Lead and Early Years Lead already work closely together and will develop a secure plan to ensure relationships become quickly embedded. An Early Years Team member already attends the Family Improvement Board for each district.</p> <p>Focussed work is being completed to ensure a range of communication strategies are utilised and the benefits of taking up places are shared with families and partners.</p>
<p>Successful roll out and promotion of the new entitlements will mean children (subject to eligibility) are in childcare earlier, which will lead to earlier identification of any emerging needs such as health and/or SEND concerns.</p>	<p>Signposting to earlier appropriate support impacting on better outcomes for children. Awareness of support service within a community through the integral role the team will need to play in the Family Hub model.</p>	<p>Greater focus on the under twos, may require additional training for early years practitioners and the early years team.</p> <p>Increased number of under twos in settings who require earlier intervention may result in additional workload.</p>	<p>Support to the sector and engagement of the Early Years Team is already planned for emotion coaching, trauma and attachment training and the large-scale Dingley's Promise workforce Development Training.</p> <p>Specific Training will be provided as part of the new CPD plan for the Early Years Consultants that focusses on the needs of the under twos, early intervention and speech and language.</p> <p>Opportunities to increase capacity in a staged approach and to share knowledge and skills across teams will be planned</p>

➤ **Communities Assessment**

Key consideration	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Continuity and expansion of a high-quality service for early years settings in communities across the County.	Increased capacity enables the team to respond more rapidly to need.	Team activity linked with short time frames for the delivery of Government agendas for the extended entitlements may dominate the capacity of the team.	Clearly identified team delivery map, team plans and work allocations that are overseen by Team Managers and discussed through the We Talk system. Priorities are reviewed regularly by Managers.
More connected service to align with family hub model and strengthen setting capacity to provide the right support, in the right place at the right time.	Knowledge of local communities and alignment of support for settings, children and families.	Lack of engagement for some settings in the proposed place-based approach and engagement with wider partnerships.	<p>Engagement sessions with early years settings, partners, and families. Launch and team engagement sessions with Family Hub Managers to empower and inform the team.</p> <p>Clear systems for information, advice and guidance are shared and communicated to communities.</p> <p>Comms strategy is developed with key dates and engagement activities.</p> <p>Setting survey is communicated and results analysed to inform future planning.</p>
Deploy the team to enable a more place-based approach to work allocation.	Strengthened relationships with the sector. Greater depth of place-based knowledge.	Consultant expertise across the County may not be fairly distributed and existing relationships across the whole	Flexibility of approach and utilisation of the teams skills and capacity to ensure that no community is disadvantaged.

Key consideration	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
	Consistency in the delivery of support.	County may be less developed.	Reflective approaches and survey to settings to ensure the Early Years Service continues to meet setting needs, relationships are maintained and the service is high quality.
Childcare and wrap around provision available to meet the needs of families.	Provision enables parents to work and support economic recovery.	Childcare and Wrap Around Provision may not be available in all locations.	In depth knowledge of the childcare sector through provision mapping and sufficiency audit and plans is carried out by the team. Sector support is provided by the team to set up new or expand existing childcare or Wrap Around provision. Sustainability support is also provided by the Early Years team free of charge to the early years sector.

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➤ Economic Assessment

Key consideration	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Successful roll out and promotion of the new entitlements will likely require an expanded early years workforce.	More opportunities to establish and develop careers in early years.	The sector is already struggling with recruitment and retention. May lead to setting closures, reduced places offered, reduction in quality.	Promotion of early years careers, job fairs, national careers service, job centre sessions, recruitment and retention work with the sector. Support to the sector to ensure consistent high-quality in settings. Continual feedback to DfE through regular LA meetings and working groups.
Successful roll out and promotion of the new entitlements will allow more parents to move into or increase work opportunities.	Thriving job market to support economic recovery.	There may be more demand for places than availability in some locations. This is due to increased challenges	Detailed sufficiency plans are maintained by the Early Years Team. These outline areas of

Key consideration	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
		nationally being faced in terms of sustainability and recruitment of qualified staff.	<p>concern and possible opportunities for development or expansion.</p> <p>Government are looking at building recruitment campaigns. The Early Years Team have been developing strategies to support settings with recruitment.</p>

➤ **Climate Change Assessment**

Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Increased travel to early years settings.	Support for the sector.	Increased travel, pollution.	<p>Team Managers will work to reduce these impacts as part of the Council's wider commitment to tackling Climate Change by: Limiting travelling distance for consultants wherever possible. However, this is dependent on the level of demand in different localities for our services, the differing expertise of consultants and their home addresses. Minimising the need to travel long distances, where possible, will contribute to Staffordshire's transport carbon impact.</p> <p>Signpost team members to Climate Change website pages, specifically noting the sections on what we can do as employees.</p>

➤ **Environment Assessment – No impacts identified**

Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations

WORK PROGRAMME

Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 2023/2024

This document sets out the work programme for the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2023/2024.

The Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for scrutinising: children and adults' safeguarding; community safety and Localism. The Council has three priority outcomes. This Committee is aligned to the outcome: The people of Staffordshire will feel safer, happier and more supported in and by their community.

We review our work programme at every meeting. Sometimes we change it - if something comes up during the year that we think we should investigate as a priority. Our work results in recommendations for the County Council and other organisations about how what they do can be improved, for the benefit of the people and communities of Staffordshire.

Councillor Bob Spencer

Chairman of the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

If you would like to know more about our Work Programme or how to raise issues for potential inclusion on a Work Programme, then please contact Helen Phillips, Scrutiny and Support Officer (helen.phillips@staffordshire.gov.uk)

Work Programme 2023/2024

Date of Meeting	Item	Details (Background)	Action / Outcome
	Cabinet Member: Mark Sutton Lead Officer: Kate Bullivant		
Page 51	Customer Feedback & Complaints Annual report – Adults Social Care Cabinet Member: Julia Jessel Lead Officer: Kate Bullivant	Report brought annually	The Annual Report was welcomed. Members asked for their thanks to be passed to all Teams for their diligence, professionalism and commitment, and particularly to those responsible for receiving the 68 compliments shown within the report. The Committee made a referral to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny asking them to consider the impact of changes to the financial assessment accessibility and method of charging six months from implementation.
	PSHE Coordinator impact after first 12 months Cabinet Member: Jonathan Price Lead Officer: Phil Pusey	The Inquiry Day report into Sexual Harassment in Schools asked that the O&S Committee consider the impact of the new PFCC funded PSHE Coordinator role after its first 12 months.	The impact of the PSHE Coordinator role after its first year was welcomed and Officers were congratulated for the impressive work completed.

Work Programme 2023/2024

Date of Meeting	Item	Details (Background)	Action / Outcome
14 September 2023 10.00 am Page 52	Impact of Cabinet Investment on Children's Services Cabinet Member: Mark Sutton Lead Officer: Nisha Gupta	Considering the impact of the Cabinet's extra investment into Children's Services, looking at specific elements of investment and the differences made.	The Chairman congratulated the Cabinet Member and Officers on the improvements made through the effective targeted use of the Cabinet investment to date.
	The Children in Care Programme Cabinet Member: Mark Sutton Lead Officer: Nisha Gupta	Item requested by Members during their June/July work programme planning.	Developments through the Children in Care programme were welcomed and supported by the Committee.
24 October 2023 12.30pm Extra meeting	Early Years Strategy Cabinet Member: Mark Sutton Lead Officer: Helen Gibson	Item of pre-decision scrutiny.	
24 October 2023 2.00pm Extra informal meeting with the PFCC	Meeting with the Staffordshire PFCC	To discuss with the Commissioner: the changes made in response to the PEEL findings and the impact of changes to date; the neighbourhood safety delivery process to enable Members to better understand and reassure their communities; and, the Humberside pilot project "Right Care Right Person", whether Staffordshire is following this	

Work Programme 2023/2024

Date of Meeting	Item	Details (Background)	Action / Outcome
		method of working with those who have mental health concerns and the potential impact of this.	
23 Nov 2023 10.00 am	Placement Sufficiency Cabinet Member: Mark Sutton Lead Officer: Natasha Moody	Considering work to increase the number of children living locally, eliminate the use of unregulated placements, reduce placement breakdown and improve the quality of the care experience. This will also include the work to accommodate the increasingly complex needs of children post covid.	
	The work of the Family Improvement Boards Cabinet Member: Mark Sutton Lead Officer: Natasha Moody	Item requested by Members during their June/July work programme planning.	
	Trading Standards Cabinet Member: Victoria Wilson Lead Officers: Catherine Mann/Trish Caldwell	Scrutinising the work of Trading Standards in enforcing more than 250 pieces of legislation and its role in maintaining a safe and sustainable marketplace.	

Work Programme 2023/2024

Date of Meeting	Item	Details (Background)	Action / Outcome
	<p>Vaping Cabinet Member: Victoria Wilson Lead Officers: Catherine Mann/Trish Caldwell</p>	<p>SCCs approach to dealing with vaping non-compliance, the unsafe nature of these products which are marketed at children and young people.</p>	
<p>4 January 2024 10.00am</p>	<p>Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Adult Safeguarding Partnership Board (SSASPB) – Annual Report Independent Chair: John Wood Lead Officer: Helen Jones</p>	<p>Report brought annually.</p>	
	<p>Staffordshire Safeguarding Children’s Board Annual Report Independent Chair: Ian Vinall Lead Officer: Lynn Milligan</p>	<p>Report brought annually</p>	
	<p>MASH Review and adoption of a Staffordshire Children’s Front Door Cabinet Member: Mark Sutton Lead Officer: Clive Cartman-Frost</p>		

Work Programme 2023/2024

Date of Meeting	Item	Details (Background)	Action / Outcome
15 Feb 2024 10.00 am Page 55	Adult Safeguarding early response Cabinet Member: Julia Jessel Lead Officer: Ruth Martin/Jo Cowcher	Considering work towards earlier responses to adult safeguarding to help reduce the number of section 42 referrals.	
	Adult Social care Assurance Cabinet Member: Julia Jessel Lead Officer: Ruth Martin/Jo Cowcher	Adult Social care Assurance and the introduction of Adult Social care inspections from October 2023, considering how Staffordshire would respond to an inspection.	
	The Community Safety Agreement, performance and impact Cabinet Member: Victoria Wilson Lead Officer: Catherine Mann/Trish Caldwell	Looking at the Community safety Agreement, considering its performance and impact.	
18 April 2024 10.00 am	Domestic Abuse Contract – 6 months in Cabinet Member: Victoria Wilson Lead Officers: Catherine Mann/Trish Caldwell	Considering the new contract 6 months in, looking particularly at the new refuge and sanctuary duties and how these are implemented in Staffordshire.	
	Adult Vulnerability Hubs Cabinet Member: Julia Jessel Lead Officer: Ruth Martin/Jo Cowcher	Looking at the development of adult vulnerability hubs, their intended outcomes and timescales to achieve these.	

Work Programme 2023/2024

Date of Meeting	Item	Details (Background)	Action / Outcome
	Adult Safeguarding Assessment Cabinet Member: Julia Jessel Lead Officer: Ruth Martin/Jo Cowcher		
	Hearing the voice of the child Cabinet Member – Mark Sutton Lead Officer – Neelam Bhardwaja	16 February meeting Members requested a better understanding of how the voice of the child is heard – particularly with respect to early identification of emerging online threats and challenges.	

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Items for Consideration – Work Programme 2023/2024

Suggested Item	Details (Background)	Proposed Date of Meeting

Standing Items 2022/2023

Item	Details (Background)	Action / Outcome
Crime & Disorder Cabinet Member: Victoria Wilson Lead Officer: Catherine Mann/Trish Caldwell	This O&S Committee is the LAs designated Crime and Disorder Panel. Following discussions with the Chairman and Officers from the PFCC and the Cabinet Member and Officers responsible for community safety, it was agreed that the Chairman and Vice Chairmen will meet with the Cabinet Member and Officers after each Safer	Chairman and Vice-Chairman briefings on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 24 July – briefing on 14 July SSCSG

Standing Items 2022/2023

Item	Details (Background)	Action / Outcome
	and Stronger Communities Strategy Group (SSCSG) to gain an overview of community safety within the County and identify areas for further scrutiny as appropriate.	
Children Improvement Board (CIB) Cabinet Member: Mark Sutton Lead Officer: Neelam Bhardwaja Page 57	The Chairman attends the CIB on behalf of the O&S Committee and feeds back developments to Members at each meeting as part of the work programme agenda item. CIB scheduled dates: 23.05.23, 28.06.23, 25.07.23, 27.09.23, 24.10.23, 28.11.23, 20.12.23	
Themes emerging from Serious Case Reviews Cabinet Member: Mark Sutton Lead Officer: Neelam Bhardwaja	Where Serious Case Reviews have taken place the Overview & Scrutiny Committee will consider any learning that can be taken from the Review	Some areas picked up by the DHR review process

Briefing Notes / Updates / Visits 2023/2024

Date	Item	Details (Background)	Action / Outcome
	"Stable Homes Built on Love" Government's response to the Care Review		
	Adult Safeguarding Quality Assurance Framework		

Working Groups / Inquiry Days 2023/2024

Date	Item	Details (Background)	Action / Outcome

Membership – County Councillors 2022-2023

Bob Spencer (Chairman)
 Gill Burnett-Faulkner (Vice Chairman - Overview)
 Paul Snape (Vice Chairman – Scrutiny)
 Ann Edgeller
 Janet Eagland
 Johnny McMahon
 Gillian Pardesi
 Kath Perry
 Mike Wilcox
 Honor Wileman

Calendar of Committee Meetings - 2023-2024

15 June 2023 at 10.00 am
 27 July 2023 at 10.00 am
 14 September 2023 at 10.00 am
 24 October 2023 at 12.30 pm
 24 October 2023 at 2.00pm – informal meeting
 23 November 2023 at 10.00 am
 4 January 2024 at 10.00 am
 15 February 2024 at 10.00 am
 18 April 2024 at 10.00 am
 Meetings usually take place in the Oak rm, County Buildings