



# Children, Families and Education

## Portfolio Performance and Resources

### Annual Report 2023/24



<b>Date</b>	04 June 2024	<b>Version</b>	1.0 (Scrutiny)	<b>Approved by</b>	WM
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# CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S INTRODUCTION



This report provides an overview of key developments relating to the Children, Families and Education Portfolio during quarters three and four of 2023/24.

Developments in relation to Family Hubs have continued at pace. The early adopter areas of Brinnington and Werneth, Edgeley, Offerton, Great Moor, and Hazel Grove went live in October 2023 and have been supporting the development of further phases. Phase 2 implementation went live in February 2024 and has focused on Heaton and Reddish, with a Town Centre launch in May; phase 3 will launch in July 2024 in Cheadle, Bramhall, and Marple.



In relation to our work to maximise uptake of the Early Years Entitlement, we have submitted our second early years entitlement self-assessment to the Department for Education, supporting readiness for the rollout of the extended childcare policy; and an action plan has been developed to increase early years places in priority areas. This will enable more children to access their early years entitlement in line with the expanded childcare policy. In addition, we continue to work with providers to maintain high-quality early years provision and the ongoing development of inclusive practice. The impact of our targeted work on improving inclusive practice and meeting the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is evidenced in recent Ofsted inspection reports, with two outstanding judgments for settings in the priority areas of Heaton Norris and Edgeley.

The most recent data for the percentage of mothers breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks was 56.6% in quarter 3, is the highest quarterly rate we have on record since 2008. This makes the year-to-date rate 54.7%, which is higher than any previous annual rate. Start Well has also now met all UNICEF baby-friendly standards for reaccreditation – this is an amazing achievement led by our Stockport NHS Foundation Trust colleagues. Our ambition is to achieve gold status.

Stockport has now completed the first year of the two-year Department for Education (DfE) programme Delivering Better Value in SEND and we are seeing success in the delivery of the initiatives agreed under the programme. Demand for Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCP) continues to be high with over 50 requests being received each month. Increased capacity and changes to working arrangements have had a positive impact, but timeliness continues to be impacted and a package of measures is being implemented to improve performance.

In addition, fixed-term exclusions and persistent absence continue to be a key focus, especially for children in need and children eligible for free school meals. Recent work has analysed the impact of multiple vulnerabilities and the findings are being used to inform work with partners.

Finally, the past two quarters have seen significant work taking place to refresh several strategies relating to this Portfolio. A draft Early Help Strategy for 2024-27 was completed and shared with Early Help Board members during quarter 4; the SEND Board has received and agreed on the SEND Strategy and Joint Commissioning and Integrated Working Plan for 2024 – 2027; the Corporate Parenting Strategy for 2024-2027 will be presented for approval at the next Integrated Looked after Children Board and Corporate Parents Working Group; and the Stockport Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy is also currently being refreshed. All strategies are aligned with the new Children and Young People Plan 2024-27 which was considered by the Stockport Family Partnership Board in April.

**Cllr Wendy Meikle,**  
**Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education**

Revenue Budget		Capital Programme
	<b>£000</b>	There is currently no capital programme for this portfolio across 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26.
Cash Limit	55,875	
Forecast Outturn	61,439	
(Surplus)/Deficit	5,564	
<u>Reserves</u> Approved use of reserves balance was £4.390m. Final draw down for 23/24 is £3.138m		

# CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

## 1. DELIVERING OUR PRIORITIES



This report is based on the **2023/24 Portfolio Agreement**, considered by the Children and Families Scrutiny Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2023 and approved by the Cabinet on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2023. The link to the agreement can be found by clicking [here](#).

This Quarter 4 Year-End report includes updates on all **delivery projects, programmes, and other initiatives** set out in the portfolio agreement, up to the end of March where this is available.

Data is reported for all **performance measures** included in the agreement that have been updated since publication of the 2022/23 Annual Reports. These are categorised to reflect the council's influence and responsibility as Council, Partnership or Contextual. These categories are used to determine the type of target used as numerical, comparator, direction of travel, or if no target is set. Definitions for these categories and target types are included within the agreement.

The updated Portfolio Performance Dashboards are published alongside these reports, and the new Climate Change and Environment Portfolio Dashboard can be [found here](#). This contains the latest data across the full set of portfolio measures, including historical trends and comparative data (where available).

The criteria for RAG ratings and direction of travel status are shown below. The rationale for any variations to this will be highlighted within the commentary.

### Key to symbols used in tables

	Red – indicator is performing significantly (>5%) below target.		Getting worse – the year-end position (forecast or actual) for this indicator is less favourable than the previous year-end.
	Amber – indicator is performing slightly (<5%) below target.		Stable – the year-end position (forecast or actual) for this indicator is within 1% either side of the previous year-end.
	Green – indicator is on track or performing above target.		Getting better – the year-end position (forecast or actual) for this indicator is more favourable than the previous year-end.
<b>GMS</b> – measure is included in the Greater Manchester Strategy outcomes framework.			

## **Priority 1: All babies and children are given the very best start in life by their parents and carers and start school ready to learn**

**The Nesta Innovation Partnership**, which is supporting the strengthening of our early years delivery model to improve outcomes and reduce inequalities, is now in its final year with evaluation expected in December 2024. The concept of an enhanced integrated maternity pathway has been developed through the 3-year partnership between Stockport, GMCA and Nesta's A Fairer Start Local. This will support more robust earlier intervention, assessment, and delivery of evidence-based intervention.

In addition, learning from the pilot will inform the review and consolidation of the Greater Manchester Early Years Delivery Model and the potential spread and scale of the enhanced integrated pathway model across Greater Manchester.

Key highlights from quarters 3 and 4 include:

- Pilot concluded and findings analysed
- Summary findings and recommendations report to support implementation
- Phase 1 area visits continued
- Training and networking - joint training delivered and joint leadership meetings established

Next steps:

- Phase 2 implementation will commence in May/June 2024
- Evaluation design, evaluation begins in June and concludes in October 2024
- Toolkit development to support scalability

### **In relation to the Healthy Child Programme:**

- Mandated contacts during quarters 3 and 4 remained above the national average, demonstrating reach and timeliness of assessments.
- ASQ3 results published in quarter 4, for children's development at 2 years old, remain below the national average at 72.6%. A renewed and strengthened approach to the first 1001 days of life and a clearer evaluation of 'what works' to improve outcomes will be prioritised within our Start Well Strategy 2024-27 refresh.

Key developments during the past two quarters include: -

- A Dads' Perinatal and Parent Infant Mental Health Coordinator role was appointed in January 2024. The post is hosted by Home Start HOST, and jointly funded by Public Health and Start Well for 12 months and has already reached 100 dads in Stockport through the universal offer.
- A review of interventions to support social and emotional development, infant mental health and parent-infant relationships has been completed, building on the learning from the Nesta Innovation Partnership. A working group has now been established to implement recommendations from the review with a focus on pregnancy to 2 years.



- Making evidence work in practice is an absolute priority for Start Well delivery. Following a competitive application process, Foundations have confirmed Stockport as one of four local authorities to take part in the Changemaker programme. The programme will support Stockport to bridge the gap between evidence and implementation and practice.

**In relation to Start Well digital developments:**

- We continue to strengthen our universal offer and extend access to information, help and support. Since the launch of the Early Years app in October 2023, the number of ASQ questionnaires completed online by parents has been consistently rising. In quarter 4, 286 questionnaires were submitted. We are currently exploring ways to bring in early years providers, which will facilitate the exchange of information on a child's development
- During 2023/24, a total of 3292 calls were received on the health visiting and school nursing advice line. The Start Well website attracted more than 15,000 visitors, and our Facebook page now boasts over 3300 followers. These achievements have allowed us to connect with numerous families via our online platforms.
- We have also seen a total of 753 new registrations to the Solihull online parenting platform recorded in 2023/24, with 507 individuals beginning or finishing a course, covering topics from pregnancy to teenage years. A communications plan is in effect to further enhance the take up of these courses.
- Between October 2023 and March 2024, a total of 3963 information packs were dispatched to families via Essential Parent ( a platform providing family support and information through articles and short videos) with a 68% open rate. Parent survey results are expected in quarter 1 of 2024/25.

**In relation to Family Hubs:**

- The early adopter areas of Brinnington and Werneth, Edgeley, and Offerton, Great Moor and Hazel Grove went live in October 2023 and have been supporting the prototype for further phases. Family hub site opportunities are still being scoped for the Offerton area.
- Phase 2 implementation went live in February 2024 and has focused on Heatons and Reddish, and a Town Centre launch is planned May 2024. Phase 3 - Cheadle, Bramhall and Marple will launch in July 2024. There will be less emphasis on designating family hub buildings and a greater focus on developing a local network of family hub bridges, which will facilitate and enhance access to the family hub offers. These places and people will have strong links to communities and trusted relationships or established connections with families, creating a wide breadth of access to information, help and support.

**In relation to Early Years Entitlement and provision:**

- We have submitted our second early years entitlement self-assessment to the Department for Education. The data informs childcare sufficiency, and an action plan has been developed to increase early years places in priority areas. This will enable more children to access their early years entitlement in line with the expanded childcare policy.

- Two-year-old take-up remains high in Stockport, at 98% in Autumn 2023 in comparison to the national take-up rate of 75%. The Spring 2024 rate was 91% (national not released) and the up rate in Stockport is consistently above 90%.
- The quality of early years provision remains strong. 100% (230) of childminders are currently graded Good or Outstanding and the current figure for group-based provision is 99% (a total of 93 Early Years Registered Providers). We have seen a slight decline in the percentage of Outstanding grades in the current Ofsted Education Inspection Framework, but this is a pattern also seen nationally. The current percentage of providers in Stockport graded Outstanding remains above the national figure.
- The impact of our targeted work on improving inclusive practice and meeting the needs of children with SEND is evidenced in recent Ofsted inspection reports, with two outstanding judgements for settings in the priority areas of Heaton Norris and Edgeley. Work is currently focussing on the children due to start reception in September this year who are currently in the process of an EHC Needs Assessment or have an EHCP. This will continue to ensure that receiving schools understand the needs of this group of children with complex SEND as they transition.
- Finally, the GMCA Physical Development Train the Trainer pilot has continued, and the Mini Motor skills resource has now been drafted to support targeted intervention for children with differences in physical development. This has been peer reviewed as part of the pilot. The GMCA School Readiness Board will receive the evaluation report at the end of the summer term.

### Measuring Performance and Reporting Progress

The latest available performance on measures relating to this priority is summarised in the table below. Commentary on any measures that have a “Red” RAG rating, as well as those rated “Amber” with a deteriorating trend, is set out beneath the table.

Indicator Name	Good Perf.	Zyr Prev. (YE)	Prev. Year End	Values	Forecast	Target		
CFE 5: % of 2 year olds benefiting from funded early education	High (Council)	90.5 %	91.2 %	91.9 % (31/03/2024)		87%		
CFE.1: % Mothers smoking at delivery	Low (Partnership)	7.2 %	7.7 %	5.3 % (31/12/2023) 41 / 777		6.9%		
CFE.2: % Mothers breastfeeding (6-8 wks)	High (Partnership)	48.5 %	49.7 %	56.6 % (31/12/2023) 414 / 731		51.5%		

### Commentary on performance

- Encouragingly, breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks was 56.6% in quarter 3 23/24, which is the highest quarterly rate we have on record since 2008. This makes the year-to-date rate 54.7%, which is higher than any previous annual rate. Start Well has also now met all UNICEF baby-friendly standards for reaccreditation – this is an amazing achievement led by our Stockport NHS Foundation Trust colleagues. Our ambition is to achieve gold status.

## Priority 2: All children and young people are well prepared for adulthood and engage in education, employment, and training

The rate of **fixed-term exclusions/suspensions** has increased for Stockport, and this is a trend that is also seen both nationally and across the North West, with comparators worsening at a higher rate than Stockport. Despite the very positive work to develop adaptive practice in our schools, particularly our primary schools, it is clear that schools are often presented with behaviour that challenges and find themselves faced with incidents that lead to suspension.

We are currently developing an enhanced offer within the inclusion service and through our neurodiversity initiatives to address these issues. We are also working with our schools, using the data as a starting point, to consider further work that we could do together. This has led to an agreement for the Local Authority to fund enhanced provision in each high school next September. Within the data, there is evidence that our increased focus on transition for years 6 to 7 did lead to a reduction in suspensions for Year 7 for the first term. We are currently delivering an enhanced model of support in an attempt to deliver greater impact this year.

In relation to **persistent absentees**, performance is on target for Stockport as a whole and SEN support cohort. However, performance is worsening for children in need and children eligible for free school meals cohorts and in both case rates in Stockport are higher than comparators. We have focussed our schools' attention around, persistent absence as a core issue and have adjusted our termly attendance meeting to support this. We are pleased to see the overall persistent absence reducing as a result of this work.

The outcomes for our more vulnerable children remain a concern. We have commissioned further local data analysis which also shows the impact of multiple vulnerabilities and evidence that the issues are more focused in particular year groups, some of which links back to experiences during Covid 19. We are using this data to inform wider services about the importance of challenging persistent absence through plans that are written to support children and young people. We are also increasing our work to address the issues of anxiety that we believe contribute to these outcomes currently.



## Measuring Performance and Reporting Progress

The latest available performance on measures relating to this priority is summarised in the table below. Commentary on any measures that have a “Red” RAG rating, as well as those rated “Amber” with a deteriorating trend, is set out beneath the table. Please note educational attainment data was reported and analysed at quarter 2 and is available to view in the dashboard; attainment data for 2023/24 will be included in the mid-year PPRR update.

Indicator Name	Good Perf.	Zyr Prev. (YE)	Prev. Year End	Values	Forecast	Target		
CFE 10: Quality of Primary School Provision	High (Partnership)	92 %	89.4 %	89.4 % (31/03/2024)		90%	A	↓
CFE 11: Quality of Secondary School Provision	High (Partnership)	52 %	60.1 %	70.5 % (31/03/2024)		76%	R	↑
CFE 20(i): Persistent absentees	Low (Partnership)	11.9 %	20.1 %	19.1 % (31/12/2023)		19%	G	↑
CFE 20(ii): Persistent absentees (CIN)	Low (Partnership)	33.5 %	39.5 %	41.6 % (31/12/2023)		Minimise	A	↓
CFE 20(iii): Persistent absentees (FSM)	Low (Partnership)	27.2 %	40.7 %	40.3 % (31/12/2023)		35%	R	→
CFE 23(i): Fixed period Exclusion/ Suspension Rate	Low (Partnership)	4.28 %	7.79 %	9.86 % (31/12/2023)		5%	R	↓
CFE 23(ii): Fixed period exclusions/ Suspension – CIN	Low (Partnership)	25.54 %	15.72 %	19.34 % (31/12/2023)		Minimise	R	↓
CFE 23(iii): Fixed period exclusions/ Suspension – FSM	Low (Partnership)	9.66 %	17.75 %	25.27 % (31/12/2023)		Minimise	R	↓
CFE.25: Young People (16-18) in emp, edu or training	High (Partnership)	97 %	96.3 %	95.8 % (31/03/2024) 6418 / 6697		97%	A	→
CFE.28: Young People (16-18) Apprenticeships	High (Partnership)	5.2 %	4.7 %	5 % (31/12/2023) 331 / 6595		5%	G	↑

### Commentary on performance

- In relation to measure CFE 11, the percentage of secondary schools rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted, performance has been steadily improving since 2020 and is now higher than pre-pandemic. Performance remains below the target of 76% but is moving closer to comparators’ performance (National 83.3%, North West 74.4%)
- Please see the commentary above in relation to measures CFE 23, ‘fixed term exclusions’ and CFE 20 ‘persistent absentees’.

### Priority 3: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

The SEND Board has received and agreed the **SEND Strategy and Joint Commissioning and Integrated Working Plan for 2024 – 2027**. Both documents align with the Children and Young People Plan 2024-2027, fulfilling ambition 4 and contributing to the other ambitions.

We are focusing attention on the requirements of our three highest levels of need: - (i) social, emotional, mental health; (ii) autism and neurodiversity; (iii) and speech, language, and communication needs. In addition, we have identified two cross-cutting themes, which are applicable to all education, health, and care services for SEND: -

- Timelines of assessment and diagnosis and ensuring those that are waiting are 'waiting well' - which will be underpinned by clear communication
- Developing and promoting our early help ambition of Success at SEN Support from the early years to leaving education, to enable the effective management of needs at the earliest point and impact on the sustainability of Education, Health, and Care Services.

The priorities in the strategy link directly to the Joint Commissioning Plan which focuses on:

- Success at SEN Support
- Timeliness of assessments and diagnosis
- Social, emotional, mental health
- Therapy Services - Speech, Language and Communication; Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy
- Joined up individual commissioning
- Preparing for adulthood

Both documents have been informed by feedback from parents, carers and young people, the workforce, the SEND JSNA and the Investment Position Statement. Sub-groups are either already in place or being developed to deliver the strategy and plan. The SEND Board will be updated on progress on a bi-monthly basis and the One Health and Care Board receives scheduled reports on progress.

Stockport has completed the final part of the first year of the two-year Department for Education (DfE) initiative of **Delivering Better Value in SEND**. Scheduled quarterly monitoring meetings provide an opportunity to present progress to DfE responsible officers. The initiative aims to support our local system partners to improve the delivery of SEND services for children and young people whilst working towards financial sustainability. We have agreed to enhance early help support, reduce the need for lengthy statutory assessments, focus on mental health, Autism, and neurodiversity and greater financial oversight and governance of decision-making. System leaders from education, health and care continue to be key partners in this change programme.

Although we are seeing success in the delivery of the initiatives agreed under the programme, we still have the key issues of low school baseline funding, continued high demand for EHCPs, demand for mainstream additional top-up funding, rising parental requests for specialist and independent school places and significant delays in the opening of planned additional state funded special schools - leading to the continued increase of the DSG deficit. Our additional recovery actions include: -

- High-cost placement review (building into rigorous annual plan review). This will include an assessment of whether a provision is effective and high quality (well attended and positive parental/student feedback, improved outcomes); appropriate to needs; and has a clear plan

for what is next (transitioning into independence, work, and skills); geographical distance (travel costs); and ultimately value for money (in line with market costs, financial transparency)

- Further work led by the School Place Planning Board to increase the sufficiency of maintained or state funded places. This will include the expansion of small cohort class sizes on the site of mainstream schools; expansion of alternative provision; full time registered places and part-time off-site interventions to stabilise mainstream places; maximising our existing capacity; block purchasing lower cost independent special school places; and investing in additional secondary local authority special school provision for those with social, emotion and mental health needs.
- Strengthened check and challenge to schools for requests for an increase in their DSG High Needs Block funding. This is being managed through link inclusion SEND teachers critically appraising how current funds have been spent and whether this is on the right things. Our Strategic Finance Service check on school balances to assess whether the school has any available resources to cover the additional costs. Advice is sought from a range of professionals on whether requests for additional funding to secure more resources are appropriate and will deliver improvements.

### Measuring Performance and Reporting Progress

The latest available performance on measures relating to this priority is summarised in the table below. Commentary on any measures that have a “Red” RAG rating, as well as those rated “Amber” with a deteriorating trend, is set out beneath the table.

Indicator Name	Good Perf.	2yr Prev. (YE)	Prev. Year End	Values	Forecast	Target		
CFE 20(iv): Persistent absentees (EHCP)	Low (Partnership)	34.2 %	35.7 %	34.3 % (31/12/2023)		19%	A	↑
CFE 20(v): Persistent absentees (SEN)	Low (Partnership)	21.3 %	32.5 %	31.4 % (31/12/2023)		Minimise	G	↑
CFE 23 (iv): Fixed-period exclusions/ Suspension (EHCP)	Low (Partnership)	12.05 %	24.02 %	25.67 % (31/12/2023)		5%	R	↓
CFE 23 (v): Fixed-period exclusions/ Suspension (SEN Support)	Low (Partnership)	12.06 %	19.26 %	27.83 % (31/12/2023)		Minimise	R	↓
CFE 62: Education, Health and Care Plans	-(contextual)	32.7	35	38.1 (31/03/2024)		N/A	N/A	○
CFE 63: EHCP issued on time	High (Partnership)	46.8 %	13 %	8.4 % (31/03/2024)		63%	R	↓

### Commentary on performance

- In relation to CFE.63 'EHCP issued on time', although demand for Education Health and Care Plan assessments has levelled off, it continues to be high with more than 50 requests a month being received. Whilst an increase in capacity and changes to working arrangements have impacted positively, timeliness continues to be impacted. To improve Stockport's current position on the timeliness of issuing EHC plans, we have completed the following:
  - Increasing EHCP Coordinators, SEND Support Officers and Education Psychology capacity as well as moving staffing capacity within teams.
  - Applying further rigour to referrals and plan quality by providing clear guidance about the information required to make a decision to assess and test against the legal application; added steps into the request to the issue panel to ensure specialist education, health and care colleagues check and challenge before issuing draft plans.
  - Introducing a number of regular timeliness and allocation meetings with EHCP teams, key leaders, and the Director of Education.
  - Plans to reduce the number of referrals by strengthening inclusion and Success at SEN Support.
  - Reviewing all communication with support from the Corporate Communication Teams.
  - Launching the Parent Portal to allow parents to access live progress on assessments as well as finalised plans and the plan review cycle. There have been system issues which we are still overcoming.
  - Launching the Provider Portal to request and receive information digitally through a secure site from education, health and care professionals who are informing the content of the plan.
  - Plans to introduce a time and motion exercise for the EHCP Team to assess more accurately how long each element of the process takes so we can more accurately calculate resources required to maintain a good level of service – measured by the DfE through timeliness indicators (EHCP issuing an annual review).
  
- In relation to measures CFE 20 'persistent absence' and CFE 23 'fixed term exclusions', the Bramhall Pathfinder is beginning to lead to practice change which should impact upon the way schools and wider services work together particularly to support those children who are at SEN support and are vulnerable to suspension. The Inclusion Service has also been working throughout this year to sharpen their focus upon any child who is suspended who is either at SEN support or who has an EHCP. They have access to weekly data and use this to drive case discussions with school leaders and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs).

#### **Priority 4: All children, young people and families have access to an effective integrated early help offer**

During quarter 4, a draft **Early Help Strategy** for 2024-27 was completed and shared with Early Help Board members. The strategy builds on the Early Help Strategy 2020-23 and includes the following areas of focus:

- Families
- Communities
- Organisational development and workforce
- Leadership
- Data and systems

The strategy will now progress through expected governance routes for sign-off.

We have successfully recruited to all vacant social worker posts in the **Family Help Service** and we have appointed a Family Help Programme Lead. Monthly practice and performance meetings are embedded, with mandatory attendance from family help leaders across the borough. Three Family Help teams are now located in One Stockport Family Hub sites (at Garners Lane, Abbingdon Road and Westmorland Drive).

The success of **the Supporting Family Programme** is critical to the overall delivery of our early help offer. Over the past year (Year 2 of the Supporting Family Programme) we have put into practice the new outcomes framework and successful closure criteria.

We have seen a notable decline in 'successful claims' – standing at 44%. In response, we have taken a 'call to action' approach to reviewing and auditing the early help assessments completed during 2023/24 - involving cases not originally attached as a 'supporting family.' This work is currently underway, and an update will be included in the next PPRR.

We also have a specific learning opportunity for Family Help teams to think collectively about the high-quality recording of presenting needs at the entry point into early help. This will help ensure that, in Year 3 of the programme, the supported family attachments are representative of the help delivered to families across the borough.



## Measuring Performance and Reporting Progress

The latest available performance on measures relating to this priority is summarised in the table below. Commentary on any measures that have a “Red” RAG rating, as well as those rated “Amber” with a deteriorating trend, is set out beneath the table.

### Early help

Indicator Name	Good Perf.	2yr Prev. (YE)	Prev. Year End	Values	Forecast	Target		
CFE.71: Family Early Help Assessments completed within 45 working days	High (Council)			69.1 % (31/03/2024) 889 / 1286		80%	R	→
CFE.72: Percentage of Early Help Episodes closed in period with a successful outcome	High (Council)	78.3 %	77.3 %	76 % (31/03/2024) 247 / 325		N/A	N/A	→
CFE.73: Re-referrals to Early Help within 12 months of a previous episode	Low (Council)		13 %	10 % (31/03/2024) 63 / 640		N/A	N/A	↑
CFE.74: Percentage of Early Help episodes closed in period stepped up to Children's Social Care	Low (Council)	14.3 %	14.7 %	13.4 % (31/03/2024) 78 / 584		N/A	N/A	↓

### Commentary on performance

- In relation to CFE 71 'Family Help Assessments completed within 45 working days', we saw a decline in assessments during quarter 2. This was during a period of significant system-wide change. During quarters 3 and 4, we have observed an upward trend in early help assessment activity across all teams. Whilst it is positive that early help activity is increasing, the timeliness data for assessments by the Family Help team is below the overall target and remains a focus in monthly practice and performance meetings.

### Health and Wellbeing

Indicator Name	Good Perf.	2yr Prev. (YE)	Prev. Year End	Values	Forecast	Target		
CFE.35: Hospital Admissions (Alcohol)	Low (Partnership)	0.03	0.04	0.01 (31/12/2023)		0.4	G	↑
CFE.36: Hospital Admissions (Injury)	Low (Partnership)	11.2	9.6	6.3 (31/12/2023)		10	G	↑
CFE.37: Hospital Admissions (Self Harm)	Low (Partnership)	3.1	1.8	0.6 (31/12/2023)		1.4	G	↑

**Priority 5: Children and young people live safely and happily within their families, and where this is not possible, they are supported to have stable loving homes and achieve positive outcomes wherever they live**

Looked after Children and Care Leavers

**The Corporate Parenting Strategy** 2020-23 is currently being refreshed for 2024-2027 and will be presented for approval at the next Integrated Looked After Children Board and Corporate Parents Working Group. The strategy has been shaped by children in care and care leavers. The Brightspots survey, led by Coram Voice, has been circulated to children in care and care leavers and the findings from the survey, alongside events run over summer 2023 with children in care and stakeholders, have informed the revised priorities.

**The Stockport Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy** 2020-23 is also currently being refreshed and updated with new sufficiency priorities to respond to increasing demand for children's placements. Recruitment for foster carers and supported lodgings providers continues to be a key priority and is supported by the Greater Manchester 'unfiltered' campaign.

We have secured approval for three new children's homes (1x 5-bed and 2x 3-beds) and the first of these new homes opened in April 2024 with further homes to follow. The local new homes are in addition to the Greater Manchester Project Skyline which is a Greater Manchester collaboration to provide 10 new children's homes across Greater Manchester.

A business case for new supported accommodation for care leavers (16+ and post-18) has been drafted and sites are currently being sought to progress with these developments. This will increase the sufficiency and suitability of accommodation locally for our care leavers. These sufficiency projects are key priorities within the Medium-Term Financial Plan and children's recovery plan.

**The Staying Close 3-year programme** launched in March 2023, and we are currently in year 2, with the programme due to cease on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025. We are awaiting an announcement from the government on whether further funding will be made available to continue to provide the staying close offer for our care leavers. The team are currently providing support to 64 care leavers to prepare for living independently in their own flats with wrap around and specialist support. We are working with a local digital video company to produce a feedback and marketing video with young people.

The 3-yr House project (Tameside/ Stockport) is also in year 2, with 8 care leavers supported across 2 cohort groups working towards independent living. This programme is also due to be reviewed in March 2025.

We continue to develop our local offer for care leavers by working with the **Care Leaver Covenant** to enhance opportunities for care leavers. Our Director of Corporate and Support Services has continued to chair a monthly meeting with key colleagues to focus on increasing education, employment, and training opportunities within the council and with partners and to optimise opportunities from social value within contracts. The new Match My Project pilot is prioritising opportunities for care leavers.

Children's Social Care

The Adolescent Safeguarding Framework has been progressed and implementation is in line with the Greater Manchester principles as set out under the Adolescent Safeguarding Framework.

From April 2024, Youth Justice and Complex Safeguarding have merged and come under the same management structure, which allows the targeted adolescent delivery model to work to the principles of the Greater Manchester model and focus on the most complex and challenging adolescents in the borough.

#### Youth Justice and Targeted Youth Support

**The annual Youth Justice Plan** was completed and approved for 2023 and the new 2024 draft version needs to be with the national Youth Justice Board (YJB) by end of June 2024, then it will go to the local Youth Justice Partnership Board (YJPB) and then through the Council's democratic cycle for approval.

**The Youth Justice Service** has reviewed its structure to allow for the existing youth justice statutory duties and the new mandatory requirements imposed in 2023, which include the 'Serious Violence Duty' and the MoJ 'Turnaround' programme for children arrested but not yet charged. The interventions include existing interventions and the new model for Prevention and Diversion including:

- Detached Youth Work targeting ASB in priority areas
- School-based services and crime awareness
- Community Sports activities coordinated across the borough
- Serious Violence programmes, and interventions for knife and weapon-related offences and prevention initiatives in line with the VRU principles.
- Prevention for children who have been arrested but not yet charged as a form of 'deferred prosecution'
- Diversion for children 'arrested and charged' offering a pre-court 'Out of Court Disposal' to prevent further escalation through the Youth Justice system.
- Police custody services for children who have been arrested
- Court services for children due to be sentenced
- Community supervision for children on criminal orders post-sentence
- Supervision of children who are remanded or receive a custodial sentence through the youth secure estate
- Resettlement services for children who are leaving custody to ensure effective transition back into community services, particularly in education.

This Youth Justice offer will now be enhanced and supported through the merger with Complex Safeguarding, which also includes children 'Missing from Home' to ensure our most complex adolescents at risk are coordinated across one management structure.

**In relation to Detached Youth Work**, all elements of the Safer Streets programme have now been completed and allowed us to focus an enhanced programme of work on ASB in priority areas, including additional funding for detached youth work, which was supported by an MMU evaluation on aspects of the work, particularly youth disorder. The funding for Safer Streets has now finished and we are exploring other ways in which the RTime detached youth work teams which continue to be focused on targeted areas of ASB can be funded and extended.

## Measuring Performance and Reporting Progress

The latest available performance on measures relating to this priority is summarised in the table below. Commentary on any measures that have a “Red” RAG rating, as well as those rated “Amber” with a deteriorating trend, is set out beneath the table.

### Children’s Social Care

Indicator Name	Good Perf.	2yr Prev. (YE)	Prev. Year End	Values	Forecast	Target		
CFE.75: Children Social Care repeat referrals – children with a previous referral within 12 months of their latest referral	Low (Council)	18 %	21 %	19 % (31/03/2024)		22%	G	→
CFE.76: Missing episode in period, percentage of return home interviews offered within 72 hours (of those offered)	High (Council)	80.8 %	84.1 %	92.9 % (31/03/2024) 312 / 336		80%	G	↑
CFE.77: Missing episodes in period, percentage of Return Home interviews accepted (of those offered)	High (Council)	67.2 %	70.8 %	63.4 % (31/03/2024) 213 / 336		65%	A	↑
CFE.81: Child Protection Plans starting in period who have been subject to a previous plan (ever)	Low (Council)	30 %	20 %	20 % (31/03/2024)		Minimise	G	→
CFE.82a: Aspire outcomes - In stable accommodation	High (contextual)		50 %	100 % (31/03/2024) 7 / 7		maximise	N/A	↑
CFE.82b: Aspire outcomes - formed a trusted relationship	High (contextual)		100 %	85.7 % (31/03/2024) 6 / 7		maximise	N/A	↑
CFE.82c: Aspire outcomes - re-engaged in education	High (contextual)		100 %	57.1 % (31/03/2024) 4 / 7		maximise	N/A	↓
CFE.82d: Aspire outcomes - missing episodes have reduced	High (contextual)		0 %	100 % (31/03/2024) 5 / 5		maximise	N/A	↑
CFE.83: Children assessed as requiring children’s social care support	-(Council)	57 %	57 %	57 % (31/03/2024)		Null	N/A	○

Looked after children and care leavers

Indicator Name	Good Perf.	2yr Prev. (YE)	Prev. Year End	Values	Forecast	Target		
CFE.53: Care Leavers in suitable accommodation (19-21)	High (Partnership)	95.6	94.8	95.9 (31/03/2024) 140 / 146		95	G	↑
CFE.54: Care Leavers the local authority remains in touch with (19-21)	High (Partnership)	100	96.5	97.3 (31/03/2024) 143 / 147		95	G	↑
CFE.78: Percentage of children placed in foster care	-(Council)	72 %	72.5 %	70 % (31/03/2024) 354 / 506		N/A	N/A	○
CFE.79: Percentage of children in own provision	-(Council)	67.6 %	66 %	64.2 % (31/03/2024) 325 / 506		N/A	N/A	○
CFE.80: Percentage of children placed with parents	-(Council)	6.5 %	7.7 %	7.3 % (31/03/2024) 37 / 506		N/A	N/A	○

Youth Justice and Targeted Youth Support

Indicator Name	Good Perf.	2yr Prev. (YE)	Prev. Year End	Values	Forecast	Target		
CFE.42: YOS - Custodial Sentences - per 1,000 10-17 yr olds	Low (Partnership)	0.07	0.21	0.07 (31/12/2023)		0.23	G	↑
CFE.70: Young person's open to YJS aged 10-17 years who are ethnically diverse (disproportionality)	Low (Council)		17.2	18.3 (31/12/2023)		N/A	N/A	↓



# CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

## 2. FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND MONITORING



### 2.1 Revenue – Cash limit

The financial position for this portfolio at Q3 was reported to Corporate, Resource Management and Governance Scrutiny Committee (CRMG) at the meeting held on the 27<sup>th</sup> February 2024 and to Cabinet at the meeting held on the 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024. Please see link below to the Q3 report presented to Cabinet (agenda item 8). The outturn forecast for this portfolio was a deficit of £5.654m.

[Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 12th March, 2024, 6.00 pm - Stockport Council](#)

#### Budget at Outturn:

	Previously Reported Q3 £000	Increase / (Reduction) £000	Budget at Outturn £000
Education	6,411	60	6,471
Children and Family Services	47,812	1,592	49,404
<b>Cash Limit</b>	<b>54,223</b>	<b>1,652</b>	<b>55,875</b>

#### Budget Changes since Quarter 3:

Description	Movement(s)
<b>Education:</b>	
Soulbury Pay Award (temp' funding)	60
<b>Total Education</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Children and Family Services:</b>	
Redundancy/Pension Capital costs (temp' funding)	62
Covid Scarring Allocation	1,530
<b>Total Children</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Total Changes</b>	<b>1,652</b>

#### Outturn Position

The service is reporting a net £8.089m deficit (before deployment of reserves) against the budget of £55.875m in 2023/24 which is 14.48% of the net cash limit budget. The deployment of reserves at £2.525m reduces this deficit to £5.564m, which is 9.96% of the net cash limit budget.

	Net Cash Limit Budget	Net Expenditure	Net Appropriations from Reserves	Net Expenditure after Scarring & Reserves	Outturn Variance	Forecast (Surplus) / Deficit Q3
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Education	6,471	7,606	(601)	7,005	534	1,291
Children & Family Services	49,404	56,358	(1,924)	54,434	5,030	4,363
<b>Total</b>	<b>55,875</b>	<b>63,964</b>	<b>(2,525)</b>	<b>61,439</b>	<b>5,564</b>	<b>5,654</b>

**Education:**

The financial resources deployed to Children and Families Services total £6.471m and the final net outturn position is a deficit of £0.534m (this has been reduced from the Q3 forecast at £1.291m via deployment of education support grants from central government for migrant communities).

The deficit continues to be a reflection of the ongoing demand, challenges and cost pressures associated with the statutory requirement to provide Special Educational Needs (SEN) transport for our most vulnerable pupils across the borough. The demand for specialist school provision placements over the last 12 months has continued to rise and put pressure on the system. The number of eligible pupils has seen consistent rises recently from c785 in May 2022, c880 in July 2023, c940 at the start of the new academic year and now stands at 973 pupils at the end of the financial year, with a further increase in routes/personal budgets, rising up to 340 routes (inclusive of 114 personal budget arrangements).

Within the above, a large number of routes relate to pupil placement in other Local Authority/External provision, which is costly, with the additional factor of new “solo” routes from September related to external placements where there are no other children attending from the same area/proximity.

The service continues to review all costs and options available on a regular basis and as part of the strategic cost avoidance plan is assessing all personal budgets options, increasing independent travel training numbers and seeking to reduce costs where parental preference/choice has been activated and had a negative impact on council costs.

In addition to the above, the following service areas reported a year-end deficit:

- Central support costs (£0.079m deficit) – A combination of increased premature retirement costs (PRC), Occupational health and CRB checks costs and senior management team interim back-fill arrangements account for the above position.
- Education Psychology Service (£0.075m) – increased demand for professional EP support/advice to support the SEND referral/assessment process alongside local and national recruitment and retention issues account for the above position.

**Children and Family Services**

The financial resources deployed to Children and Families Services total £49.404m and the position at outturn is a deficit of £5.030m. The most significant variances are described below:

**Children Looked After (CLA)**

The largest area of deficit is in CLA placements where the deficit at outturn is £2.963m as illustrated below:

CLA Category	Position at Outturn £000
External Residential placements	2,289
External Foster care placements	(114)
Internal Foster care and Staying Put	788
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,963</b>

This reflects the continuing challenges currently facing the service in the securing of placements for Children Looked After (CLA), the increased complexity of cases and the rising cost of placements in the external market. There are 31% of placements in external residential provision above the average weekly cost of c£5k per week per child in the Greater Manchester residential framework contract. The

deficit relating to CLA placements accounts for 55% of the overall deficit. The number of children looked after has continued to rise since Q3 with an overall CLA population at outturn of 504 compared to 493 at Q3. As at the end of March there are 83 young people placed in external residential settings, 46 in registered children's homes and 37 16+ young people placed in semi-independent provisions. Of those aged 16+, 18 (49%) are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). Internal children's home provision is full to capacity.

There has been a net reduction of 1 across all external settings, residential and foster care (Independent Fostering Agencies – IFA) since Q3 and an increase of 10 in internal foster care highlighting the continued efforts of the service to place internally wherever possible.

It is important to understand the impact of the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) on the continued increase in the CLA numbers. There is no preventative work which can be undertaken by the Council that can have an impact on the numbers received through the NTS.

### **Avoid Need to Accommodate**

The deficit at outturn on avoid need to accommodate and CLA maintenance payments is £0.875m.

We are continuing to fund a number of high-cost therapeutic placements for children with complex needs at home to prevent family breakdown. There has been a further package of support agreed since Q3 of £5,200 per month as well as the continuation of a package of £3,420 per month which was previously forecast to end. There has also been an increase in purchasing card spend in the final quarter some of which relates to hotels and accommodation for families fleeing domestic violence.

Support funded through S17 is reviewed monthly and packages lasting longer than 3 months are discussed with Service Leads. A full review of the payments for the financial year including analysis by locality, duration, nature of payments etc. will now be carried out and provided to the Head of Service.

### **Children with Disabilities (CWD) Service**

There is a deficit in the Children with Disabilities (CWD) service of £1.228m. At outturn there were 121 level 3 respite packages, 4 more than at Q3 and 142 level 2 support packages. Of the 121 respite packages 17 have an annual cost above £0.020m and account for 56% of the total spend. These packages are supporting young people with complex needs and disabilities who would otherwise be in high-cost residential placements.

Analysis of spend and income from 2011/12 to 2023/24 shows a significant increase in spend for CWD but a significant reduction in joint funding from Health. It is hoped that a review of the funding and tripartite decision making through the newly established multi agency resource panel along with a full service review and investment in short breaks provision will enable a balanced budget in 2024/25.

### **Recovery Plan**

A recovery plan is in place to address the deficit including the establishing of the multi-agency resource panel mentioned above. It is also hoped that new internal children's homes provision will be open early in 2024/25. However, a small proportion of the 2023/24 deficit, £0.206m, is as a result of the demand allocation being reduced to account for the net saving of having the new provisions open for one quarter of 2023/24. Any further delay to the opening of the new provision will result in further deficits where the demand allocations have been amended to take account of the one new children's home being open from the start of the new financial year.

## 2.2 Earmarked Reserves

The majority of earmarked reserves are held at a corporate level and services produce a business case to drawdown funds, which is approved through Corporate Leadership Team and Members. This strategic approach is designed to provide financial resilience for the council and to ensure that council reserves are used on an invest-to-save basis and to support council priorities. The exceptions to this are ringfenced reserves and the Directorate Flexibility Reserve.

The table below reflects the use of reserves in 2023/24 and is after the review of the council's reserve policy which was presented to Cabinet on the 19<sup>th</sup> September 2023 (Agenda item 9)

[Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 19th September, 2023, 6.00 pm - Stockport Council](#)

### Transfer from reserves:

Reserve Category	Reserve Narration	To be used for	Reserve / Approved Use Balance £000	Approved use of Reserves £000	Balance of Reserve £000
<b>Directorate Reserves</b>					
Directorate Reserve	Directorate Flexibility Reserve	FGC Co-ordinator	23	0	23
Directorate Reserve	Children's Reserve	New Beginnings	99	99	0
Directorate Reserve	Directorate Flexibility Reserve	Deputy Service Lead and Designated Officer SW	50	50	0
<b>Corporate Reserves</b>					
Corporate Reserves	SEND MTFP	SEND WSoA	387	62	325
Budget Resilience Reserve	Children's Reserve	Education Psychology Service	273	273	0
Corporate Reserves	Legislative and Statutory Requirements Reserve	Funding remaining for serious case reviews -	79	0	79
Corporate Reserves	Third Party Monies Reserve	NW Partnership monies	156	0	156
Corporate Reserves	Revenue Grant Reserve	ASC SW Development Grant	28	0	28
Corporate Reserves	Revenue Grant Reserve	CYP SW Development Grant	19	0	19
Corporate Reserves	Revenue Grant Reserve	CYP ASYE Grant	10	0	10

Corporate Reserves	Third Party Monies Reserve	LSCB, Local Safeguarding Children's Board	139	36	103
Budget Resilience Reserve	Children's Reserve	Foster carer support	100	0	100
Strategic Priority Reserve	Cabinet Positive Investments	Targeted Youth Support 22/23	146	107	39
Budget Resilience Reserve	Children's Reserve	IRO Staffing	29	29	0
Budget Resilience Reserve	Children's Reserve	Leaving Care PA and IRO Staffing	49	49	0
Budget Resilience Reserve	Children's Reserve	Leaving Care Pure Insight and Mentor Co-ordinator	30	30	0
Reserve Linked to Budget	Workforce Investment/Change Reserve	Senior Practitioner Retention	45	45	0
Budget Resilience Reserve	Children's Reserve	CWD Short Breaks	195	195	0
Budget Resilience Reserve	Children's Reserve	UASC	197	197	0
Budget Resilience Reserve	Children's Reserve	WD Staff (Formerly PIP) - 22/23 approved reserve	27	27	0
Budget Resilience Reserve	Children's Reserve	WD Staff (Formerly PIP) - 23/24 approved reserve	47	0	47
Reserve Linked to Budget	Transformation - Invest to Save Reserve	GM House Project	171	103	68
Reserve Linked to Budget	Workforce Investment/Change Reserve	Social Worker and Team Leader Market Supplement	156	156	0
Reserve Linked to Budget	Transformation - Double Running Reserve	Phased Savings	600	402	198



Budget Resilience Reserve	Children's Reserve	PIP	163	126	37
Reserve Linked to Budget	Transformation – Invest to Save	Intensive Support Workers	11	11	0
Budget Resilience Reserve	Children's Reserve	Additional Social Worker Teams – 22/23 approved reserves	200	200	0
Budget Resilience Reserve	Children's Reserve	Additional Social Worker Teams – 23/24 approved reserves	653	653	0
Budget Resilience Reserve	Children's Reserve	Foster care service pressures	87	87	0
Reserve Linked to Budget	Children's Reserve	Family Drug and Alcohol - programme support	20	0	20
Budget Resilience Reserve	Children's Reserve	MASSH Staffing	167	167	0
Budget Resilience Reserve	Children's Reserve	Foster carer support payments	34	34	0
	<b>Total</b>		<b>4,390</b>	<b>3,138</b>	<b>1,252</b>

## 2.3 Portfolio Savings Programme

The following table provides an update on the progress against the savings to be achieved in 2023/24.

Education, Children & Families	Savings Programme	Value Savings Approved 2022/23 for 2023/24 (£000)	Value Savings Approved 2023/24 for 2023/24 (£000)
Robust Corporate Governance	Children & Young People Services Review	295	905
	<b>Total</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>905</b>
	<b>Total Savings</b>		<b>1,200</b>

The savings target has been met using a combination of the Family Help Service restructure, non-recurrent savings, and double running reserves. As some of the savings are non-recurrent in nature, the service is working to identify savings for future years.

## 2.4 Dedicated Schools Grant

The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is made up of four blocks (Schools, early years, high needs, and central school services), the schools delegated budgets are considered spent at the point of delegation as individual school budgets are managed at school level with the governing body.

The remaining budgetary resources are the Centrally Held Budget (CHB) is managed by the local authority on behalf of schools and consists of a range of services to schools and pupils.

The total DSG allocation which is centrally held is £66,559m comprising the early years block (£22.012m), high needs block (£37.894m), de-delegated funding for services to LA maintained schools (£3.485m), Central Reserve (£1.158m) and Central School Services (£2.010m).

The final outturn position provides an in-year net deficit at £12.563m, which provides for a cumulative DSG deficit of £23.816m at 31 March 2024.

The significant cost pressure within the overall final outturn position are increases in the high needs block pertaining to:

- More pupils in mainstream schools accessing HN top-up support funding.
- Requirement to increase local specialist capacity further for SEN placements.
- Requirement to access more alternative provision / PRU places due to increase in permanently excluded pupils.
- Increase in placements in high-cost external/independent providers; and
- Increase in occupational health and speech and language support contracts for the increased special school pupil cohort.

The above is demonstration of the continual increase in demand for pupils with high needs who require education and support in a specialist provision.

The LA is in tranche one of the central government's delivering better value (DbV) support program grant, which provides £1m of non-recurrent grant funding over the next two years. This funding will be used to identify opportunities, invest in our local key priorities, adopt new working ways / transformation of services, and review the deployment of financial resources to ensure a more sustainable budgetary position going forward.

## 2.5 Capital Finance Update and Outlook

There is currently no capital programme for this portfolio across 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25.

## 2.6 Allocated One-Off Resources

### Targeted Youth Support £0.150m

There was a carry forward of £0.146m into 2023/24 from the 2022/23 £0.150m allocation, this was increased due to the maximising of 2022/23 Youth Work grants. Spend at outturn is £0.107m and £0.039m will be carried forward into 2024/25.

The funding will assist in sustaining the Detached Youth Work offer into 2024 for the first quarter. We are exploring additional funding streams to sustain the Detached Youth Work provision, as the external funding (Safer Streets) that was enhancing the provision has now ended and we are required to demonstrate a match up to March 2024. There is a new statutory duty to provide youth work for unitary authorities, and this will be informed by the current Scrutiny review of youth work provision and the recent NYA Peer Review that took place in Stockport earlier this month.