

Public Document Pack



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Wednesday 11 March 2026

Notice of Meeting

Dear Member

Children's Scrutiny Panel

The **Children's Scrutiny Panel** will meet in the **Council Chamber - Town Hall, Huddersfield** at **10.30 am** on **Thursday 19 March 2026**.

This meeting will be webcast live and will be available to view via the Council's website.

The items which will be discussed are described in the agenda and there are reports attached which give more details.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S Lawton".

Samantha Lawton

Service Director – Legal, Governance and Commissioning

Kirklees Council advocates openness and transparency as part of its democratic processes. Anyone wishing to record (film or audio) the public parts of the meeting should inform the Chair/Clerk of their intentions prior to the meeting.

The Children's Scrutiny Panel members are:-

Member

Councillor Itrat Ali (Chair)

Councillor Aafaq Butt

Councillor Tanisha Bramwell

Councillor Hannah McKerchar

Councillor Ashleigh Robinson

Councillor Richard Smith

Agenda

Reports or Explanatory Notes Attached

Pages

1: Membership of the Panel

To receive apologies for absence from those Members who are unable to attend the meeting.

2: Minutes of the Previous Meeting

1 - 10

To approve the Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on the 6th February 2026.

3: Declaration of Interests

11 - 12

Members will be asked to say if there are any items on the Agenda in which they have any disclosable pecuniary interests or any other interests, which may prevent them from participating in any discussion of the items or participating in any vote upon the items.

4: Admission of the Public

Most agenda items take place in public. This only changes where there is a need to consider exempt information, as contained at Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. You will be informed at this point which items are to be recommended for exclusion and to be resolved by the Committee.

5: Deputations/Petitions

The Panel will receive any petitions and/or deputations from members of the public. A deputation is where up to five people can attend the meeting and make a presentation on some particular issue of concern. A member of the public can also submit a petition at the meeting relating to a matter on which the body has powers and responsibilities.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10, Members of the Public must submit a deputation in writing, at least three clear working days in advance of the meeting and shall subsequently be notified if the deputation shall be heard. A maximum of four deputations shall be heard at any one meeting.

6: Progress of the Ofsted Improvement Plan

13 - 20

The Panel will consider a report on the Progress of the Ofsted Improvement Plan.

Contact: Vicky Metheringham, Service Director

7: The Re-design of the Leaving Care Service

21 - 28

The Panel will consider a report on the Re-design of the Leaving Care Service.

Contact: Vicky Metheringham, Service Director

8: Verbal Update on the SEND White Paper: Every Child Achieving and Thriving

The Panel will receive a verbal update on the published SEND White Paper - Every Child Achieving and Thriving ([Every child achieving and thriving \(HTML version\) - GOV.UK](#)).

Contact: Tom Brailsford, Director for Children and Families

9: Performance Data (Children's Services) - verbal update on highlights

The Panel will consider a verbal update on the performance highlights from the latest Children's Services data report covering period ending 31st January 2026.

Contact: Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director
Vicky Metheringham, Service Director

10: Pre-decision scrutiny - Cabinet decisions on the horizon

The Panel will consider any potential areas of pre-decision scrutiny in accordance with any cabinet decisions relating to children and young people which are on the horizon and receive updates from senior officers in Children's Services.

Contact: Service Directors (Children's Services)

11: Feedback from Panel Members on issues considered by Kirklees Parenting Board

Panel Members who attend the Kirklees Parenting Board, will feed back on key areas of focus considered by the Board on 10th March 2026, which will be of interest to the Panel.

Contact: Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director
Vicky Metheringham, Service Director

12: Work Programme and Agenda Plan for 2025/26

29 - 58

The Panel will discuss progress of the work programme and agenda plan for the 2025/26 municipal year.

Panel dates for the 2026/27 municipal year will be arranged and approved by Council Annual General Meeting in May 2026.

Contact: Helen Kilroy, Assistant Democracy Manager

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Contact Officer: Helen Kilroy

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY PANEL

Friday 6th February 2026

Present: Councillor Itrat Ali (Chair)
Councillor Aafaq Butt
Councillor Tanisha Bramwell
Councillor Hannah McKerchar
Councillor Richard Smith

In attendance: Councillor Viv Kendrick, Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Councillor Jane Rylah, Cabinet Member for Education
Tom Brailsford, Executive Director - Children and Families
Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director – Learning and Inclusion
Robert Fordyce, Head of Service – Quality Assurance and Practice Development (on behalf of Vicky Metheringham, Service Director – Family Help, Safeguarding and Permanence)
Emma Brayford, Head of Educational Outcomes
Mark Janes, Chair of SACRE
Jake Womack, SACRE
Emma Salter, SACRE – Professional Advisor

- 46 Membership of the Panel**
No apologies were received.
- 47 Declaration of Interests**
Cllr Hannah McKerchar declared an other interest in the agenda item relating to the Kirklees Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) Annual Report 2024-25 (Minute No. 52 refers) as Vice-Chair of SACRE.
- 48 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**
RESOLVED –
That the Minutes of the meeting held on 11th December 2025 be approved as a correct record.
- 49 Admission of the Public**
All agenda items were considered in public session.
- 50 Deputations/Petitions**
No deputations or petitions were received.

51 Public Question Time

No public questions were received.

52 Kirklees Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) Annual Report 2024 -2025

The Panel considered the 2024/25 Annual Report from the Kirklees Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE). Emma Brayford, Head of Educational Outcomes, introduced the report and advised the Panel that the Local Authority were compliant in meeting the statutory responsibilities with regard to SACRE, and were advised by Pennine Learning who worked alongside the service and SACRE. These responsibilities were:

- To monitor Religious Education (RE) provision across the local authority and produce the annual report which is shared with the Department for Education (DfE) and the National Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education.
- To monitor and support collective worship across the local authority.
- To ensure that where there have been family concerns, complaints, or requests to be removed from collective worship that they have had the opportunity to raise those with the advisory council.
- To produce an agreed syllabus for RE for community schools; this was the first year of that syllabus being in operation.
- To provide schools with high quality training and networking opportunities.

Mark Janes, Chair of SACRE, informed the Panel that SACRE met four times each year, and that its membership included Councillors, members of religious and other communities, teachers and representatives from the Church of England. The partnership with Kirklees was essential and Kirklees funded the work of SACRE. Strong relationships with officers and the partnership with Pennine Learning enabled SACRE to help teachers deliver the RE syllabus, called Believing and Belonging, so that children and their education remained at the heart of SACRE's activities.

Jake Womack, RE Advisor at Pennine Learning, thanked Kirklees for the funding that enabled the work of SACRE to provide high quality religious education training and support for the benefit of students and teachers. RE provided the opportunity for teaching critical thinking and remained an important subject. The Panel were advised that:

- The locally agreed syllabus that began in 2024 continued to be well embedded, with half of Kirklees schools using the planning and many used the associated resources.
- Interfaith events had taken place and were planned for this year, with over 2,000 pupils taking part, interacting with the faith and belief panel.
- Secondary and Primary networks had been opened up to teachers free of charge, and networks were being run with up to 40 primary school teachers, with Secondary networks representing about 20% of the schools in Kirklees.
- A SACRE award had been set up as an alternative to the costly RE Quality Mark bronze standard, which demonstrated where schools were meeting the standards required to deliver quality religious education. Advisors visited

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schools as part of this process, to evaluate learning through a learning walk, work scrutiny and a student panel.

- Work was ongoing with the school welcome project. SACRE held a directory of faith and belief groups that schools could connect with, to invite speakers in and to organise visits to places of worship. This enriched students' education by providing religious literacy and cultural understanding, which was at the core of the syllabus. Ultimately SACRE aimed to help young people to find their place in a multifaith, diverse, multicultural society and to navigate its complexities.

Emma Salter, RE Advisor at Pennine Learning, advised the Panel that SACRE connected with and engaged in sustained relationships with community groups that were aligned with SACRE's values and objectives. The Communities Team attended the SACRE meeting in September and Kirklees North and South Interfaith groups attended regularly. Teachers were invited to attend the December SACRE meeting and feedback data was being gathered from teachers across Kirklees. At the network meeting questionnaire feedback was gained from Secondary teachers and this work would continue at the March Primary network.

Emma Salter informed the Panel that in November the DfE issued its report outcome on the curriculum and assessment review, which indicated that RE may become a national curriculum subject, rather than a statutory subject, and in response to that, a task and finish group was underway. By the end of March 2026, programs of study would be presented to government for further discussion to assess whether that RE should be part of the national curriculum. This would be the biggest legislative change on RE since 1988.

SACRE offered an open invitation to Councillors to join the Advisory Council, and any interested Councillors could contact Mark Janes, Emma Salter or Jake Womack to find out what would be involved.

In answer to questions, the Panel were advised that:

- Feedback from young people about their RE learning was positive, and they valued the opportunity to share their thoughts and opinions. Feedback had been collected through the RE award and the interfaith events and would continue to be a priority in the coming year.
- A series of videos featuring a number of local faith leaders talking about their faith was available on [Pennine Learning YouTube](#).
- The high quality RE curriculum was suitable for all demographics as it focused on the skill set needed to navigate our diverse world, including understanding, compassion and relationships. Where schools had issues they wanted to address in their local community, specific advice could be provided through working with the RE advisors to implement strategies to navigate those issues.
- Parents were able to bring concerns about RE directly to SACRE, and it was part of SACRE's statutory duty to address parental concerns, however, no complaints had been received in the last year.
- Parental feedback was considered by individual schools as part of curriculum development by teachers.

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- SACRE were working closely with the Communities Team which strengthened the voice of families and the wider community in curriculum and training design moving forward.
- SACRE had produced a guide on faith sensitivities to help teachers work with parents, called "Sharing the Journey", which was available on the Pennine Learning website.

RESOLVED –

The Panel noted the report and thanked Officers and the representatives of SACRE for their contributions.

53

'The Big Plan' - Preparation for Adulthood (PFA)

The Panel considered a report on 'The Big Plan' – Preparation for Adulthood (PFA) presented by Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director for Learning and Early Support. The report outlined what Preparation for Adulthood was, as set out in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice (2015) and provided an overview of the work that the Local Area Partnership was undertaking to improve, as part of the SEND transformation. The Panel was asked to note the progress made so far and the planned next steps.

Jo-Anne Sanders presented the highlights of the report which included:

- Preparation for Adulthood (PFA) meant being healthy, having care needs met, educational opportunities, entering the world of work or volunteering, being part of society, and enjoying leisure and social activities.
- As a partnership there were statutory responsibilities to remove barriers to achieving this preparation.
- High quality resources for parents, carers and young people were available online to provide an understanding of PFA.
- Transition from childhood to adulthood involved different health and social care services, and possible changes in educational or work setting.
- The Local Government Agency had provided advice to help prioritise, and develop services, support and sufficiency for young people.
- Suggestions from parents and the Parent Carer Forum had included additional learning opportunities for young people, help with their housing needs and information on their rights regarding finances and benefits.
- A 'Preparing for the Future' event had been held with council services and partners, and output from the event had fed into the refreshed PFA workstream under the SEND Transformation Plan.
- Feedback from young people had informed the plan, specifically with regard to providing for those young people who had been in receipt of some SEND support but had not received an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- The Inspecting Local Authorities Children's Services (ILACS) inspection in June 2025 acknowledged the good practice in PFA, including Project Search's supported internships and Real Employment's help in finding the right jobs for young people.
- ILACS identified PFA as an area for further improvement.

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- 'Big Plan 3' incorporated focused activity around PfA over the next 12 months, including a board refresh and the convening of a working group involving partners including parents.
- Positive feedback was given by the Peer Review regarding self-evaluation, culture, the new governance, the Local Offer Live, examples of co-production, personalised transition support, job coaching and the enthusiastic participation of all those involved in providing PfA services.
- Areas for action included establishing and publishing a clear pathway, from Year 9, putting in place collaborative transition teams (transition huddles). Gap analysis and a commissioning review was recommended, and it was suggested that good practice be built upon with supported internships.
- The review team had also learned from Kirklees and asked for the PfA Board's terms of reference.
- More support from the RISE partnership would be available in March, with co-production workshops, training for social workers, and the gathering of young people's voice.

In answer to questions, the Panel were informed that:

- Calderdale and Kirklees Careers monitored data on young people which enabled detailed analysis to be undertaken. It was a statutory duty to collect and monitor this information. Regular updates allowed detailed planning, and informed bespoke work with young people who were not in education, employment or training.
- Successful PfA would mean that young people were physically and mentally healthy, able to pursue their dreams, understand their rights, build toward independence and have access to a personalised pathway to education, training and employment.
- Qualitative measures could be recorded on EHCPs for some aspects, such as independent travel and work experience.
- There would be a focus on transition from childhood to adulthood, involving teams that straddled adults and children's services.
- The Director of Adults and Children's Services communicated regularly about the projected number of young people who may require support as adults so that sufficiency was prepared for the future according to need.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted and Jo-Anne Sanders be thanked for her contributions.
2. That the final report on Preparation for Adulthood would be shared with the Panel.

54 Multi-agency developments around the Children's Social Care Reforms
The Panel considered a report on Multi-agency developments around the Children's Social Care Reforms, presented by Robert Fordyce, Head of Service and Practice Development.

Robert Fordyce highlighted the following:

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- The Department for Education had asked children's social care departments to get engaged in one of the biggest reforms of children's social care in a generation.
- The government's aim was for every child to be given the best chances in life, by focusing on earlier intervention in children's lives, and preventing children getting to the stage where they could no longer live with their families.
- The three main areas for change were: family help, support to children on child protection plans, and involving families more effectively through family group decision-making meetings.
- The ultimate aim was for children and families to be supported to stay together and get the help they need.
- The Children's Well-being and Schools Bill required families to be offered a family-led decision-making meeting before care proceedings were issued.
- Assessment templates were being changed to one assessment and one plan for children, to ensure that families did not have to complete complicated reassessments on new forms when their level of service provision changed.
- Pathfinder local authorities had been trying out these changes and Kirklees had been linked in with them to learn what had worked well and what challenges they had faced.
- Oversight of progression of the reforms was being provided by the safeguarding partnership executive group which fed into the chair's delivery group, and a Family First Partnership program board that had been set up.
- A working group had been set up to ensure that the renewed one assessment plan was easily understood by families, using clear language.
- Quarterly updates were being sent to the DfE on progress made and a quarterly newsletter was being sent to partners.
- Engagement events had been held with staff, and the Our Voice Team had been working with high school children.
- Challenges included:
 - There would be changes to some job titles and job roles. In other authorities this had led to staff leaving, so to avoid disruption, Kirklees needed to ensure that valued and experienced staff remained in post.
 - Effective working with Multi-agency teams.
 - Meaningful and effective engagement with children and families, building on what was already known.
 - Once reforms had been implemented, reviews would need to take place to make sure they were working.
 - Ensuring partners had a shared approach to risk management and a shared understanding of effective intervention.
- Reforms should be implemented by April 2027, with a plan completed by the end of the financial year, although the Children's Well-being and Schools Bill was going through parliament more slowly than had been expected.
- Next steps included talking to HR partners and the unions to ensure that staff were well briefed on any changes, and engaging with staff and partners to ensure that the reforms were right for children and families in Kirklees, and would make a positive difference.
- The reforms would be used as an opportunity to make changes to the things that could be improved, while building on current strengths.

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In answer to questions, the Panel were advised that:

- Partners in education, health and police had safeguarding as part of a wide variety of other responsibilities, but Kirklees was fortunate to have wide representation on its subgroups and buy-in at senior leadership level.
- Tom Brailsford and his peers in health and police attended all the engagement events and were well aware of the changes.
- The subgroups had the right level of expertise to help guide the reforms.
- Police and health colleagues had met counterparts in the pilot areas to find out how well the reforms worked from a police/health perspective.
- Barriers to communication included the difficulty of schools and the authority having different systems to record safeguarding concerns. Education representation was needed in those teams who could navigate both systems.
- Where a child had a social worker, and a designated safeguarding lead in education had concerns but could not immediately speak to the social worker because they were unavailable, improvements could be made so that those urgent conversations could take place more effectively.
- Libraries and other council spaces were being considered as spaces alternative to schools where family group decision-making meetings could take place.
- The local population needs assessment would build up a big picture on a ward by ward level to get the right services and support in the right places, using data that agencies already had.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted and Robert Fordyce be thanked for his contributions.

55

Performance Data (Children's Services) - verbal update on highlights

Robert Fordyce gave an update on performance data to 31st December 2025:

- Children's Social Care Assessments – The percentage of assessments completed within 45 days was improving, but needed to increase by a further 6% to be in line with statistical neighbours. Service managers were writing weekly performance reports which kept a clear focus on the overall performance of teams. Where teams were performing less well, support had been put in place, and social workers were being offered protected time to record their assessments on liquid logic.
- Children's Social Care Caseloads - Vacancies in some social work teams had impacted the caseloads of social workers in the Assessment and Intervention Service. This was being addressed through a variety of pathways into social work, including apprentices, frontline students, the step-up programme, and hosting university students on placement. Over the next 24 months there were a number of students due to qualify, with the first social work apprentices qualifying in July 2026.
- Section 47 Assessments - A section 47 assessment was completed when a multi-agency strategy meeting had taken place to discuss concerns that a child may have suffered significant harm. In December it was noted that more than 50% had an outcome of "other" which covered a range of different options eg: a child may already be on a child protection plan or may be a

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looked after child but there was enough risk for a strategy meeting to take place. These were monitored to ensure that children were put through that process only when necessary.

- Core Groups – Timeliness and rate of core groups changed according to the month; staffing levels, school holidays and other staff taking leave over Christmas could impact figures. The aim was to ensure that education representatives attended core groups where appropriate. Timely recording should improve these figures as social workers used their protected time.

Jo-Anne Sanders gave an update on December's EHCP performance data and highlighted the following key points:

- The number of EHCPs held was over 400 more than the same period in 2024.
- 38 plans were issued in December, with only 5.3% issued within the statutory compliance time frame. This was partly due to a spike in requests for assessment in June and July which had impacted the EHCP team and those who provided statutory advice.
- Cumulatively across the 12 months of 2025, there had been 50.8% compliance (issued within the 20 weeks) which was more than double the previous year's performance.
- The new IT case file management system provided data to pinpoint where the challenges were.
- Pressure on the educational psychology team due to maternity leaves and retirement had been identified. The existing team had been bolstered with locums to ensure compliance increased.
- It was important to balance compliance with quality to ensure that the plans were of good quality when they were issued.
- Less than five plans in December had been complex cases whereby families were waiting more than 52 weeks.
- A very small number had been waiting 30 weeks.
- The vast majority of EHCPs were issued between 20 and 30 weeks, and most of those were issued in week 21 and 22.
- Low percentages of compliance could continue into January and February but the partnership were working together to improve timeliness.
- A new head of service had been recruited and was working on communication with families on waiting times, which had been identified as an important issue.

In answer to questions from the Panel it was advised that:

- Caseload numbers for social workers was monitored, and although the number (18.6 in December 2025) was useful for benchmarking, it was the complexity of the cases that had more of an impact on social worker's workload. To address this, nuanced conversations took place weekly between social workers and team managers to identify any flash points and address these. Allocation of cases was being reviewed so that the most experienced workers were working on the more complex cases.

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- Re-referrals at 20.1% was due to a variety of reasons, one of which was that when families were working under a child in need plan, this was voluntary, and there were occasions when families chose to stop the involvement. When a further incident arose, and another referral was made, this then impacted on re-referral figures.

RESOLVED –

That the verbal reports be noted and officers thanked for their contributions.

56 Pre-decision scrutiny - Cabinet decisions on the horizon

No items of pre-decision scrutiny on Cabinet decisions were discussed.

57 Work Programme and Agenda Plan for 2025/26

Visits were being organised for February 2026, dates and times were in the process of being arranged and the Panel would be updated on these.

RESOLVED –

That the Work Programme and Agenda Plan for 2025/26 be noted.

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KIRKLEES COUNCIL			
COUNCIL/CABINET/COMMITTEE MEETINGS ETC			
DECLARATION OF INTERESTS			
Childrens Scrutiny Panel			
Name of Councillor			
Item in which you have an interest	Type of interest (eg a disclosable pecuniary interest or an "Other Interest")	Does the nature of the interest require you to withdraw from the meeting while the item in which you have an interest is under consideration? [Y/N]	Brief description of your interest

Signed: Dated:

NOTES

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

If you have any of the following pecuniary interests, they are your disclosable pecuniary interests under the new national rules. Any reference to spouse or civil partner includes any person with whom you are living as husband or wife, or as if they were your civil partner.

Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain, which you, or your spouse or civil partner, undertakes.

Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from your council or authority) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by you in carrying out duties as a member, or towards your election expenses.

Any contract which is made between you, or your spouse or your civil partner (or a body in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest) and your council or authority -

- under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and
- which has not been fully discharged.

Any beneficial interest in land which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, have and which is within the area of your council or authority.

Any licence (alone or jointly with others) which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, holds to occupy land in the area of your council or authority for a month or longer.

Any tenancy where (to your knowledge) - the landlord is your council or authority; and the tenant is a body in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest.

Any beneficial interest which you, or your spouse or your civil partner has in securities of a body where -

(a) that body (to your knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of your council or authority; and

(b) either -

the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or

if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.



REPORT TITLE: PROGRESS OF THE OFSTED IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Meeting:	Children’s Scrutiny Panel
Date:	19th March 2026
Cabinet Member (if applicable)	Cllr Viv Kendrick
Key Decision Eligible for Call In	No No Planned report to Children’s Scrutiny
Purpose of Report To support Children’s Scrutiny Panel oversight on the progress of the Ofsted Improvement plan.	
Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The scrutiny panel note the report and raise any questions arising from the report. Reasons for Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure transparency and accountability 	
Resource Implications: There is no resource implications associated with this report.	
Date signed off by <u>Executive Director</u> & name	Tom Brailsford 4.3.26
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance?	N/A
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning (Monitoring Officer)?	N/A

Electoral wards affected: All

Ward councillors consulted: n/a

Public or private: Public

Has GDPR been considered? Yes - no risk associated

1. Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides an update to Scrutiny Panel members on the progress of the improvement activity within Children’s Social Care following our most recent inspection in 2024. The inspection identified that there had been significant improvement, and the overall judgement found Children’s Services in Kirklees as being ‘good’.

1.2 Variability was identified in the experience and progress of care leavers, that there are challenges regarding the sufficiency of homes for children in care and care leavers to live

in, and with the consistency and quality of written records for children in care and care leavers.

- 1.3 The inspection team identified that leaders were fully aware of their challenges and had clear action plans in place to address them.
- 1.4 The areas of improvement identified by Ofsted during the inspection were:
 - The effectiveness of practice with every child who is experiencing harm from neglect and / or domestic abuse.
 - The quality of written plans, records and meeting minutes for the minority of children in care and care leavers where these documents are weak.
 - The availability and choice of homes for children in care and care leavers.
- 1.5 We are making positive progress in the areas that were identified in our inspection and well beyond. We have a rigorous improvement plan that ensures our services enhance opportunities and experiences for families in Kirklees. Our plan is overseen by elected members and our Executive Leadership Team.
- 1.6 Improvement activity is also supported by the Kirklees Safeguarding Partnership which identified four strategic priorities for 2025–2027. Two of these are specifically related to Neglect and Domestic abuse. This approach means that strategic leaders are supporting improvements to children.
- 1.7 Through our ambitious expectations we have seen significant improvements to our practice. Leaders have an accurate understanding of our strengths and the areas of practice we need to further develop. Our self-evaluation is updated annually and is built on feedback from audits of practice, thematic focused deep dives and practice learning days across the service supported by an annual calendar of planned activity. This highlights progress against a range of areas of practice as well as identifying the steps we need to take to make improvements.
- 1.8 This report below provides an overview of the progress we have made in addressing these improvement areas as well as identifying where we have more to do.

2. The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection – Good

The effectiveness of practice with every child who is experiencing harm from neglect and / or domestic abuse.

- 2.1 We have taken pro-active steps to strengthen our practice so that it more effectively addresses risk for children who are experiencing harm from neglect and domestic abuse. This includes the development of a regular check in with colleagues in the police so that we understand the circumstances as to why the police use their powers of protection.
- 2.2 We have embedded a mutually owned protocol with the police to support improved experiences for our children and families and have undertaken significant work with practitioners to strengthen practice around domestic abuse. We provide the Safer and Together training to enable our practitioners to hold perpetrators accountable for their behaviour and work alongside victims to implement robust plans that increase safety for children, support their recovery from trauma and promote longer term wellbeing.

- 2.3 Despite this progress, we are concerned that domestic abuse continues to be a significant issue that our families experience and is the primary reason for repeat child protection plans and repeat referrals. Following the tragic murder of one of our parents we will use the Child Safeguarding Practice Review to support multi agency practice.
- 2.4 We have established a task and finish group which oversees our approach to how we can strengthen practice where domestic abuse is a driving factor, mindful that many of our notifications to the national panel are also associated to domestic violence. This includes enhancing management oversight, strengthening perpetrator interventions, ensuring our practitioners utilise their training and improving analytical chronologies to better inform decision making. The primary focus of this group will be to review and strengthen the support available for victims, children, and perpetrators of domestic abuse particularly those open to our service. A key priority is to address the identified gap in perpetrator-focused work.
- 2.5 To further ensure progress in this area, we have introduced reflective forums across all teams, providing opportunities to support enhanced practitioner reflection and peer review. Through regular reflective forums either as standalone meetings or as part of existing team meetings, practitioners have the opportunity to learn from each other and hear a different perspective on their work. Practitioners report that they find this approach supportive to their practice.
- 2.6 We have integrated our Family Support Workers within the Family Help, Safeguarding and Permanence directorate as we develop our Family Help Service. This approach promotes consistent practice and enables practitioners to develop long lasting relationships with families irrespective of their needs. We have embedded performance expectations in the service and have spent significant time working alongside practitioners supporting a smooth transition.
- 2.7 We have introduced Daily Risk Assessment Management Meeting (DRAMM) which enables agencies to share information about victims, perpetrators, and children, conduct a risk assessment and implement a safety plan which provide effective services for victims, perpetrators and children affected by the abuse. This detailed oversight and collective review of agencies' information means that we have joint decision making and assessment of risk. Alongside the DRAMM, we also convene a daily screening meeting to review incidents of domestic abuse assessed as low risk. These meetings involve both a Police Officer and a Social Worker, facilitating collaborative decision making on the appropriate next steps for each case. This practice has been applauded in our front door health checks.
- 2.8 We have secured additional investment to develop and enhance the offer from our Domestic Abuse Consultants, and the ambition is to extend access to reach to a broader cohort of families impacted and affected by domestic abuse. The Domestic Abuse Consultants work with families who are either fleeing domestic abuse or where there are support needs for the family who wish to remain in a relationship. The consultants work with children and families and provide early intervention work. This ensures that we provide preventive work to reduce escalation of concerns. Family feedback reinforces the impact of this support. To support best practice, a key element of our revised domestic abuse strategy is workforce development of which there is a package of Safe and Together training for social work staff and other practitioners. We know from feedback that this is supporting their work with families, but domestic abuse remains a key concern for the partnership.

- 2.9 We are aware that neglect remains a significant area of need for families in Kirklees and to address this have re-launched the neglect toolkit through providing training to all family facing staff in children's services. The effectiveness of the toolkit is overseen through the Kirklees Safeguarding Children's Partnership which sees neglect as one of its key strategic priorities.
- 2.10 Our strategic governance and oversight arrangements of domestic abuse have also been strengthened so that we are confident that the partnership has oversight of the work and the priorities which improve outcomes for children.

The quality of written plans, records and meeting minutes for the minority of children in care and care leavers where these documents are weak.

- 2.11 Improving our use of language in children's records has been our priority during 2025. We have made significant progress in the way we write on children's files and our most recent practice week, which focused on language, was overwhelmingly positive. Practitioners are universally in support of this approach, and we welcomed external support to implement this practice with Dr Lisa Cherry, Director of the Trauma Informed Consultancy and her team, which provided high quality training to support this transformation. The fundamental shift we have taken is writing directly to the child in our case notes, plans and analysis of our assessments. This transformation has taken place across all teams including our Independent Reviewing Officers, Family Help workers and Social Workers. Our case notes following a visit and all management oversight is now written in the form of a letter to the child as are the minutes from our Looked After Children reviews. This means that we not only have the child at the forefront of our mind when writing about children, but it also means that when children read their files as adults, they have a clear sense of what was done to help keep them safe and why.
- 2.12 We have driven the expectation that where children are assessed to be in need that children should have an outcome focused child in need plan. This is now more embedded into practice, and our performance is evidencing this. However, there is still more work to be undertaken to ensure that the actions are linked to plans and that they could be smarter, but we have seen an improvement in the numbers of children having meaningful and understandable plans.
- 2.13 We have developed clear practice guidance and training for social workers around what makes a good contingency plan. In keeping with our commitment to using plain English, we call these back up plans. There has been an increase in children having an established family-owned plan, and this is a continued priority for us to improve.

3. The experiences and progress of children in care – Good

The availability and choice of homes for children in care and care leavers

- 3.1 We have driven a proactive, targeted approach to the recruitment of Foster Carers in our efforts to provide more local homes for our children including Supported Lodgings Carers for specific cohorts of children. Our vision to provide children with long term stability and permanence is overseen through greatly improved oversight and individual tracking of children.

3.2 We are seeing more of our children experiencing continuity of care and permanence through our commitment to Special Guardianship Order (SGO) arrangements. This is due to our innovative approach in disregarding means testing to former Foster Carers including IFA carers ensuring consistent financial support. We have also invested in a Connected Persons Support Service who support children and their carers.

3.3 Despite seeing an increase in new Foster Carers, we continue to experience challenges with finding timely homes for a small minority of our Looked After Children and are working creatively, including with the private and independent sector to make improvements in this area. We recognise where our area of need is and in response are developing a dedicated cohort of emergency carers available at short notice and introducing enhanced fee structures for carers supporting children with complex needs.

3.4 We are taking ambitious steps to strengthen the service so that our children can be cared for locally and in loving homes. These include:

- **Expanding and improving internal residential provision**

Increasing internal capacity and undertaking a recruitment campaign to support being able to look after more children in our own internal provision.

Refurbishment, registration, recruitment and embedding therapeutic models (DBT, PACE) across all internal homes.

- **Strengthening our Fostering Service**

Delivering an improved fostering marketing strategy to increase the number of Foster Carers.

Launching enhanced Foster Carer schemes through developing enhanced carers aimed at meeting higher need cohorts.

- **Developing more housing options for care leavers**

Increasing local semi-independent options and reducing the need for temporary B&B accommodation.

- **Refreshing the Sufficiency Strategy and Needs Assessment**

Updating our provider facing strategy and forecasting future demand to drive appropriate commissioning.

- **Strengthening governance and market engagement**

Running provider forums, visiting local homes, and refreshing governance to ensure we have local homes who will meet our children's needs

4. **The experiences and progress of care leavers – Requires improvement to be good The availability and choice of homes for children in care and care leavers.**

4.1. Ofsted assessed the experiences and progress of care leavers to require improvement to be good. At the time of the inspection, it was noted that the service had already made significant progress and held a clear plan for further embedding and extending the improvements already acknowledged by the inspectors.

- 4.2. There has been extensive efforts and achievements since 2024 in building a collaboration with a range of partners to enhance our care leaver offer and the support and experiences available to care leavers in our authority.
- 4.3. Working collaboratively with housing colleagues and the wider council, we have seen an end to the use of temporary accommodation for care leavers other than in exceptional situations for short periods of time. For the minority of care leavers who experience these unforeseen arrangements, robust risk assessment processes ensure young people are safe.
- 4.4. We have established specialist accommodation provision providing four independent flats for young people, developed an increased number of homes and improved the quality of the accommodation for our care leavers which is driven by our Kirklees Parenting Board.
- 4.5. Our strategic finance panel chaired by the DCS and our quarterly check and challenge events with the Chief Executive scrutinise accommodation arrangements for our care leavers and have seen considerable progress in this area.
- 4.6. Given the increase in support being provided by the service, together with an increase in the number for young people entitled to statutory support, Children's Services approved increasing the numbers of Personal Advisors to support care leavers, as well as a review and regrade of the job roles within the service and an increase in management and supervisory capacity to support risk and vulnerability management.
- 4.7. The service has also worked together with the Local Authority's Homes and Neighbourhood teams to reduce the risks of care experienced young adults requiring temporary accommodation and to increase the experiences for care leavers moving into their own homes. This work has been overseen and supported through the Kirklees Parenting Strategy 2024 – 2027, which sets out a number of linked priorities including our priority to 'Develop our Care Leavers Partnership to deliver success for life'.
- 4.8. Through our priority group we have ensured that we have the right accommodation arrangements for care leavers, including those in housing crisis. We have undertaken focussed work to reduce the risk of use of temporary accommodation for young adult care leavers.
- 4.9. We have established joint tracking of crisis accommodation arrangements on a weekly basis and have seen a significant reduction in care leavers experiencing temporary accommodation. We only use temporary accommodation in a crisis and emergency.
- 4.10. A significant factor in our success in reducing the use of temporary accommodation has been our joint project. We have developed shared accommodation provision which provides short term supported self-contained flats for young adults.

5. Concluding comments

- 5.1. We have continued to make significant progress to the quality of our practice, and our mature and embedded quality assurance arrangements provide senior leaders with a line of sight to children and their families experiences. Our self-evaluation provides our service with an assurance that we know what our strengths are and where we need to focus our efforts. As a leadership team we are clear about our priorities, and we have well established plans which drive progress at pace.

- 5.2. Our workforce is the most stable it has been for the last three years. We continue to ensure that practitioners feel valued by the leadership team. We are delighted that we have significantly improved the quality of their supervision and consistent management oversight. Where we have vacancies, we have plans to fill these through our apprenticeships and student social workers. We will be further strengthened when our current newly qualified social workers move to become our experienced workers.
- 5.3. Services and support to our Care Leavers have been transformed since the inspection in 2024. Our Kirklees Parenting Board is well embedded, and we have enhanced and broadened the ownership of corporate parenting duties. This is exemplified by the council's commitment to recognise care experience as a protected characteristic which is now making a difference to the experiences of our Care Leavers.
- 5.4. Our ambition to embed across the service, records which are sensitive and written to children has been a huge success. Our practitioners are motivated and inspired in their practice as a result of the high-quality training and our vision to lead this approach which is role modelled through opportunities such as our practice week.
- 5.5. Our ambitious plans to embed the Family Help Service has been a huge success. We anticipate a significant service redesign during 2026 and will continue to work collaboratively with our partners as we jointly work together to deliver a service that meets the needs of the children and families in Kirklees.
- 5.6. As with most local authorities in England, two of our key priorities and areas for development are addressing the risks posed by neglect and domestic abuse. Using the neglect tool kit in a consistent way, both in Children's services and with our wider partners will really help our practitioners understand and address these risks. Our domestic abuse board will further strengthen our response to this area of risk and will identify ways to better equip our practitioners to help keep children safe.
- 5.7. Sufficiency of homes for our children remains a key challenge and focus but collectively we are determined to establish increased suitable homes for children when they come into our care. Strategic, creative plans and an investment in an Edge of Care Service will support us in this area of practice.

6. Information required to take a decision

Not applicable

7. Implications for the Council

Not applicable

7.1 Council Plan

Not applicable

7.2 Financial Implications

Not applicable

7.3 Legal Implications

Not applicable

- 7.4 **Climate Change and Air Quality**
Not applicable
8. **Risk, Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) or Human Resources**
Not applicable
9. **Consultation**
Not applicable
10. **Engagement**
Not applicable
11. **Options**
Not applicable
12. **Next steps and timelines**
Updated plan will be developed in line with the priorities identified in the revised self-evaluation.
13. **Contact officer**
Rob Fordyce
Head of QA & Practice Development/Principal Social Worker
Robert.fordyce@kirklees.gov.uk
14. **Background Papers and History of Decisions**
n/a
15. **Appendices**
n/a
16. **Service Director responsible**
Vicky Metherringham
Family Help, Safeguarding & Permanence
Vicky.metherringham@kirklees.gov.uk



REPORT TITLE: THE RE-DESIGN OF THE LEAVING CARE SERVICE

Meeting:	Children’s Scrutiny Panel
Date:	19th March 2026
Cabinet Member (if applicable)	Cllr V Kendrick
Key Decision Eligible for Call In	No No Planned report to Children’s Scrutiny
Purpose of Report To support Children’s Scrutiny Panel oversight on the work to deliver improvements and the re-design of the leaving care service.	
Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The scrutiny panel note the report and raise any questions arising from the report. 	
Reasons for Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure transparency and accountability 	
Resource Implications: There is no resource implications associated with this report.	
Date signed off by <u>Executive Director</u> & name	Tom Brailsford 4.3.26
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance?	N/A
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning (Monitoring Officer)?	N/A

Electoral wards affected: All
Ward councillors consulted: Not Applicable
Public or private: Public
Has GDPR been considered? YES - no risk associated

1. Executive Summary

1.0 Prior to the inspection of Kirklees local authority children’s services in July 2024 by the children’s services regulator (Ofsted), children’s services had undertaken extensive work to self-assess our services for care leavers and had put into effect a Continuous Service Improvement Plan to improve our service and support for Care Leavers. In February 2024, the lead member for children’s services put a motion to full council to recognise care experience as a ‘protected characteristic’. There has been extensive efforts and achievements since 2024 in building a collaboration with a range of partners to enhance

our care leaver offer and the support and experiences available to care leavers in our authority. Given the increase in support being provided by the service, together with an increase in the number for young people entitled to statutory support as care leaver, children services approved a re-design of services to increase capacity for allocating Personal Advisors to support care leavers, a review and regrade of the job roles within the service and increase in management and supervisory capacity to support risk and vulnerability management. The service has also worked together with the local authority's homes and neighbourhood teams to reduce the risks of care experienced young adults requiring temporary accommodation and to increase the experiences for care leavers moving into their own homes. This work has been overseen and supported through the Kirklees Parenting Strategy 2024 – 2027, which sets out a number of linked priorities including our priority to 'Develop our Care Leavers Partnership to deliver success for life'.

1.1 The report below provides an overview of this work.

2. Information required to take a decision

2.0 In July 2024 Kirklees children services was inspected by Ofsted who assessed the experiences and progress of care leavers to require improvement to be good. At the time of the inspection, it was noted that the service had already made significant progress and held a clear plan for further embedding and extending the improvements already acknowledged by the inspectors.

2.1 Underpinning the progress identified at the time of the inspection and since, is our continuous Care Leavers Service Improvement Plan which was initially informed by our work with North Yorkshire as our partners in practice and Mark Riddell, the National Government Advisor for Care Leavers. We have embedded a range of opportunities for our care leavers and developed a robust local offer supported by our growing community of partners which embrace our corporate parenting commitment to care experienced young adults in Kirklees.

2.2 We have committed additional investment to support timely allocation capacity for Care Leavers who require a Personal Advisor and increased management capacity to provide additional oversight. This will maximise oversight of risk and vulnerability to our care leavers and enhance Personal Advisors capacity to support effective planning and support with our care leavers. We have also created an Advanced Personal Advisor role providing progression within the service. We are confident that our increased capacity and working culture will further embed and drive our vision for care leavers throughout our service and wider partnership.

2.3 Our Kirklees Parenting Partnership has grown in strength and effectiveness and has harnessed and capitalised on the resources of wider partners. Progress of this work has been presented to, and supported by, the Kirklees Parenting Board which is jointly chaired by the local authority Chief Executive Officer and Lead Member for Children's Services. There is a wide representation of partners on the board including colleagues from Probation Services, the local college, the University of Huddersfield and a broad range of health partners and others. Our partnership supports the delivery of our Kirklees Parenting Strategic priorities which were revised to reflect the achievements and progress made in a re-published strategy in November 2025.

2.4 Our Board's most significant development in the past year has been to establish our care experienced young adult board members. This has enhanced our capacity to understand

the lived experience of children in care and care leavers which is at the centre of our decision making.

- 2.5 The board held its second annual 'Take Over' event in November 2025 which brought together a wider group of care experienced adults and children from our Care Leavers Forum who, supported by our care experienced young adult board members, delivered a fantastic evening board meeting and engaged a host of our strategic partners. Our care experienced board members ensure that they provide direct feedback from board meetings through visiting the Care Leavers Forum and Children in Care Council or through a feedback video they now record following each board meeting.
- 2.6 Our priorities are supported by the Children's Services Data and Insight Team, and we have developed key data reporting which informs service delivery, management oversight and effective reporting to our senior leadership and Corporate Parenting governance structures. This assures us that our quality assurance activity is effectively providing leaders with an accurate line of sight and that our improvement steps are well informed. We remain ambitious for our care leavers and our refreshed Kirklees Parenting Strategy sets out aspirations which is building a Care Leaver Partnership to 'deliver success for life.'
- 2.7 The quality of our pathway plans is steadily improving largely due to our redesigned 'My Pathway plan' which was co-produced to support better ownership for our young care leaver adults. We know that we have more to do to ensure consistent practice for our 15- to 18-year-olds so that they are supported to take greater control of their plans as we seek to incorporate their goals, dreams and plans.
- 2.8 We have at times experienced higher caseloads than desired, which has inhibited the time to focus on establishing children's voices consistently within 'My Pathway' plans. Our plans have greatly benefited from the work done across our services to ensure that the language and 'voice to the child' is embedded in records and plans.
- 2.9 In October 2025 we undertook a 'deep dive' to consider the quality of 'My Pathway' plans for 15 to 25-year-olds. This showed us that the planned improvements in both the quality and timeliness of our pathway planning for Looked After Children was evident within our Looked After Children's Team.
- 2.10 As with our neighbouring authorities, identifying timely suitable independent accommodation for care leavers remains a challenge. Care leavers experiences are greatly improved as a result of our enhanced collaboration with our Homes and Neighbourhoods colleagues. Local Authority accommodation is consistently being provided as the first move to independent accommodation for most of our young people moving to their first tenancy.
- 2.11 Care leavers benefit from a 'landlord' who is also their corporate parent. We have also seen an improved letting standard for care leavers with access to housing revenue grant being used to supplement tenancy ready standards to support our young people as they move to their first homes. Work continues in partnership with our housing services to further consolidate our mutually agreed standards. We are working closely with other accommodation providers so that we can establish the same standard for other forms of new tenancies with wider social landlords. This has meant that care leavers have more to flexibility to utilise their setting up home allowance to purchase additional items to furnish and personalise their first home.

- 2.12 Our Local Offer is now published and well embedded, and care leavers and our practitioners are clear about accessing information about entitlements through our digital offer. We have also established access to the national Care Leaver Offer webpages to ensure that our offer is available and accessible as widely as possible.
- 2.13 Our increased investment into our Care Leavers Service has been designed to maximise and promote care leavers to develop and maintain positive, trusting and stable relationships with their Personal Advisers. We have invested in promoting the use of staying put arrangements where this is assessed as right for the young person and their carers. We recognise the significance of supporting our young adult care leavers to maintain relationships with carers, to support a personal and individual approach to them moving towards independence.
- 2.14 We have further developed opportunities through our two hubs with a focus on supporting care leavers to establish, develop and maintain strong social networks. In addition to our regular focussed drop-in sessions, such as stay and play sessions for care leaver parents and their children, our craft sessions supported by the Meltham Quilters and our emotional health and wellbeing drop-ins, we also provide social events. These take place across the year and bring our young adult care leavers into a space co-designed and supported by Personal Advisors where they can access cooking, laundrette and washing facilities. We have care leavers accessing these services with their families and we promote an atmosphere where trusted adults are available to support and help in a safe space.
- 2.15 The rise in the numbers of care leavers working with the Care Leavers Service correlates with our commitment to provide ongoing supportive relationships and the opportunity to be an active part of the "Kirklees Family". We are delighted that our deliberate intention to support our older care leavers to maintain their relationships with their trusted Personal Advisors and to access ongoing support is an approach that our care leavers are choosing to engage with.
- 2.16 Young adult Care Leavers over the age of 21 now represent a quarter of all care leavers with an allocated Personal Advisor. Increasing the opportunity for continued engagement for adult care leavers over 21 years has been a specific focus over the past year. In addition to those with a named Personal Advisor we provide support through our hubs to care leavers who access support for specific issues and are seeking help with advocacy and signposting.
- 2.17 We currently have 358 Care Leavers with a named Personal Advisor of which 86 are aged between 21 and 25. Our data tells us that we are in touch with 96% of our care leavers, 86% of our 18-year-old care leavers and 98% of our 19 – 22-year-old care leavers. We recognise there has been some data inconsistencies with the recording of visits, and we continue to work with our data team to reflect our revised practice standards on maintaining and reporting engagement and contact.
- 2.18 We have deliberately based our Personal Advisors in our two hubs to provide both a duty service to assure access and as an effective way to give care leavers practical support and access to resources where needed. We have worked with partners to expand our offer in developing a broader range of sessions including with the DWP and Calderdale and Kirklees Careers to support employment groups.
- 2.19 Following the successful engagement with our care leavers football activities in 2024 we sought sponsorship to develop and equip our team 'The Kirklees Kickers' with a kit they

wanted to wear. They were provided with a fantastic opportunity engaging with the national care leavers football tournament staged at the Molineux stadium in Wolverhampton. This has led to an increased group of care leavers from very different backgrounds coming together, developing their social networks supported by our Personal Advisors.

- 2.20 The extent of our partnership contributions has continued. We were overwhelmed with volunteers offering to support our care leavers Christmas dinner which proved to be a fantastic day for the third year running. In addition to the direct support and benefits these activities and opportunities provide for our care leavers; they also support our efforts to raise awareness and build our community of support for care experienced adults living in Kirklees.
- 2.21 Through our priority group we have ensured that we have the right accommodation arrangements for care leavers, including those in housing crisis. We have undertaken focussed work to reduce the risk of use of temporary accommodation for young adult care leavers. Our Strategic Director for Housing 'sponsored' this work retaining oversight and supporting joint work with our services. As a result, we have established joint tracking of crisis accommodation arrangements on a weekly basis and have seen a significant reduction in care leavers experiencing temporary accommodation. We only use temporary accommodation in a crisis and emergency. A significant factor in our success in reducing the use of temporary accommodation has been our joint project. We have developed shared accommodation provision which provides short term supported self-contained flats for young adults.
- 2.22 Our Kirklees Parenting Strategy sets out our ambition to support and promote the health of our care leavers in Kirklees. This priority is jointly led by our Designated Safeguarding, Children looked After and Care Leavers Nurse employed by the Integrated Care Board alongside our Service Manager for our Emotional Health and Wellbeing Services. The priority group has driven our performance in ensuring that all our care leavers received their 'health passports' as they reach adulthood, secured arrangements to support care leavers access to free prescriptions up to their 25th birthday and embedded emotional health and wellbeing drop-in sessions as an established core offer at our hubs. This significant improvement to our care leaver offer was developed through direct feedback and support from our young adult care leaver board members.
- 2.23 Our previous 'independence programme', which was to support young adult care leavers to prepare for managing their own tenancy, came to an end of grant funding in August 2025. Following a review of the impact of the programme we agreed that this approach had achieved limited buy in. We have instead taken an individual approach to support our young people to develop the skills, confidence and knowledge of navigating their own tenancy as an individual approach which is complemented by the ranges of drop ins and partners working with our services and in our hubs supporting our care leavers.
- 2.24 Supporting our care leavers to engage in education, training and employment remains one of the key priorities within our Kirklees Parenting Strategy. We have celebrated some significant achievements of individual care leavers including one of our previous young adult care leaver board members who has secured a residential children's home job in our authority which has been a life ambition for her. This year we have supported 10 care experienced young adults to begin their university journey and seen four complete their degrees.

- 2.25 One of those who started university this year is an adult separated young person who despite the instability of their immigration application was able to achieve GCSEs in English and in digital infrastructure. Alongside their studies they volunteer as well as being a part of a football team. They have continued to be a huge support for some of our separated young adults to promote their attendance at activities and events. They are now studying at university as well as being one of our Kirklees Parenting Board members.
- 2.26 Our December 2025 data shows that 65% of young adult care leavers who were available to the labour market and supported by the services were engaged in education, training or employment which though below our aspiration is above the national average.
- 2.27 We have considered and evaluated our strengths and areas for development and have the following improvement activities set for the next 12 months.
- We plan closer work with our Adult Services to enhance transition arrangements.
 - Embed our commissioned training and development programme across our Care Leavers Service.
 - Expand and build on the success of our joint work with housing services delivering accommodation offers for former Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children who are adult care leavers awaiting home office decisions to remain and those care leavers requiring accommodation crisis.
 - Ensure Pathway Plans are consistent in quality with clear actions and timescales and co-produced with the young person across all service areas.
 - Increase the number of care leavers engaged in higher education and employment with training.
 - Further embed a culture of 'The Family Business' across the authority and our wider partners and through our Virtual School and local authority's Employment and Skills service to develop greater employment, apprentice and work experience opportunities.

3. Implications for the Council

Providing services to care leavers is a statutory responsibility for the council which is monitoring and subject to inspection by Ofsted.

3.0 Council Plan

Our Kirklees Parenting Strategy aligns closely with the principles and priorities of the Kirklees Council plan most notably to work in partnership, protecting the vulnerable and achieving inclusion.

3.1 Financial Implications

Our plan and services for care leavers has maximised opportunities to enhance our services through working with partners and developing our relationships with third sector and independent stakeholders. Without these relationships many of our activities, projects and programmes would be significantly limited.

3.2 Legal Implications

Many of the services provided through our care leavers services are statutory requirements of the authority and subject to external oversight and inspection through our inspectorate.

3.3 Climate Change and Air Quality

Not applicable

3.5 Risk, Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) or Human Resources

Not applicable

4. Consultation

Not applicable

5. Engagement

Not applicable

6. Options

Not applicable

6.0 Options considered

Not applicable

6.1 Reasons for recommended option

Not applicable

7. Next steps and timelines

Not applicable

8. Contact officers

Joel Hanna Head of Service for Corporate Parenting Joel.Hanna@Kirklees.gov.uk

Lauren Stephenson Service Manager Care Leavers Service

Lauren.Stephenson@Kirklees.gov.uk

9. Background Papers and History of Decisions

- Ofsted Report on: Inspection of Kirklees local authority children's services (available Online)
Inspection dates: 8 to 19 July 2024
Lead inspector: Rachel Griffiths, His Majesty's Inspector
- Kirklees Parenting Strategy 2024 – 2027 (available Online)

10. Appendices

None

11. Service Director responsible

Vicky Metherringham Service Director for Family help, Safeguarding and Performance
Vicky.Metherringham@Kirklees.gov.uk

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CHILDREN’S SCRUTINY PANEL – WORK PROGRAMME 2025/26

MEMBERS: Cllr Itrat Ali, Cllr Richard Smith, Cllr Aafaq Butt, Cllr Ashleigh Robinson, Cllr Hannah McKerchar, Cllr Tanisha Bramwell

SUPPORT: Helen Kilroy (Assistant Democracy Manager), Claire Gardiner (Democracy Officer)

THEME/ISSUE	Lead Officer	APPROACH/AREAS OF FOCUS	OUTCOMES/ACTIONS	Timescale
<p><u>Standard items</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-decision scrutiny (decisions by Cabinet) • Performance Information (Children’s Service) – Informal meeting • Feedback from Panel Members on issues considered by Kirklees Parenting Board • Ambition Board Minutes 	<p>Cabinet Members/Senior Officers (Children’s Service)</p> <p>Presented by Service Directors (produced by Paul Caladine)</p> <p>Panel Members who attend Kirklees Parenting Board</p> <p>Senior Officers and Cabinet Members</p>	<p>Panel will check at each meeting with Cabinet Members and Senior Officers from Children’s Service if there are any potential areas of pre-decision scrutiny they need to consider at future meetings.</p> <p>The Panel will continue to monitor the performance of the Learning Early Support Service and Children.</p> <p>Members of the Panel who attend the Kirklees Parenting Board will feedback on key issues to the Scrutiny Panel as appropriate.</p> <p>The Panel will receive the minutes of the quarterly Ambition Board meetings for information.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Each meeting of the Panel</p> <p>Updates will be provided at Panel meetings when a meeting of the Board has taken place (meetings take place quarterly).</p> <p>Ongoing and when available</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Every meeting</p> <p>When available</p> <p>When available</p>
<p>Review of the Improvement Journey (Children and Families)</p>	<p>Tom Brailsford/Vicky Metheringham</p>	<p>The Panel will continue to review the Improvement Journey of the Children’s Service, have an oversight of the Ofsted improvement plan, attend appropriate</p>	<p>Multi-agency developments around the Children’s Social Care Reforms – Panel meeting on 6th February 2026</p>	<p>Panel on 6.2.26</p>

	<p>YJS – Ian Mottershaw/ Teresa Racz Leaving Care Service – Joel Hanna Children’s Social Care Reforms – V Metheringham CQC and Ofsted Inspection – V Metheringham</p>	<p>meetings and undertake observation to see the key elements of the new arrangements on working together to safeguard children with a particular focus on the effective implementation of the service and good practice.</p> <p>The Children’s Service were looking to undertake a redesign of leaving care to make it more robust and the Panel will invite the Head of Corporate Parenting to Scrutiny to provide updates on progress.</p> <p>The Panel will visit the Leaving Care Service and monitor the work taking place to develop this area of practice.</p> <p>The Panel will scrutinise the following areas -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversight of the Ofsted Improvement Plan and planned Re-design of the Leaving Care Service which will include a visit to the Team • Multi-agency developments around the Children’s Social Care Reforms, the leaving care service and Front Door • Updates of future Ofsted Inspections • The Panel will visit Children’s Social Care Teams to continue their review of the improvement journey of the Children’s Service 	<p>The Panel will consider a verbal report on the multi-agency developments around the Children’s Social Care Reforms.</p> <p>Care Leavers Month 2025 The Panel were invited to attend the Care Leavers Month events which took place during November 2025 to celebrate the achievements of care leavers and raised awareness of challenges that some might face. The national theme for Care Leavers Month was “Rising as me: overcoming challenges, transforming, and finding your identify”.</p> <p>Visit to activities organised by the Youth Justice Service (YJS) for young people The Panel have been invited to attend some of the activities being co-ordinated by the YJS Team with young people and will take place from May 2025 until December 2026. Activities are planned by staff who will take the lead and include activities such as playing pool, baking and playing games.</p> <p>Visit to Families First Partnership Programme staff and partner engagement session on 3rd February 2026 The Panel attended the partnership event which was a national initiative by the DfE</p>	<p>Various dates in Nov 25</p> <p>Various dates</p> <p>Visit on 3.2.26</p>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Our Children’s Voice Team will visit the Panel to discuss the work undertaken on ‘What it feels like to be excluded as a child. • Joint Targeted Area Inspection of multi-agency response to child sexual abuse in the family environment – the Panel will consider information on the inspection – timescales to be confirmed • Visits to – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leaving Care Service - Front Door Social Care Team - North service Area Children’s Social Care Team (Dewsbury and Batley) - Activities that the youth justice service coordinate with young people and the team 	<p>and formed part of the Kirklees Families Together initiative. The key points fed back from the Panel were:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it was positive to see such a wide pool of people in the room, though feedback from some attendees was that the event may be a little early when input could be given on specific proposals at a later date. • The general proposals seemed to be warmly received, especially the focus on engagement with families from the start through Family Group Conferencing, consideration of how to bring in the young person's voice and make the child protection meetings less intimidating/negative for them. • The multi-agency model was also seen as a real improvement, though some of the operational details were still to be ironed out. • Some people at the event felt that the previous loss of professional advocacy within this process was detrimental. <p>Visit to Children’s Social Care Conference on 17th March 2026 The Panel will attend and observe the Conference which will take place on International Social Worker Day. A number of speakers will present on the</p>	<p>Visit on 17.3.26</p>
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			<p>day, including a young person who will share her experiences of having a social worker as a child in Kirklees and the long-lasting impact this has had on her childhood.</p> <p>Visit to Leaving Care Service – 11th March 2026 The Panel will visit the Leaving Care Service to look at the re-design of the Team.</p> <p>Oversight of the Ofsted Improvement Plan and planned Re-design of the Leaving Care Service – Panel meeting on 19th March 2026 The Panel will consider a report on the Oversight of the Ofsted Improvement Plan and planned Re-design of the Leaving Care Service, which will include a visit to the Leaving Care Service Team in 2026.</p> <p>Our Children’s Voice Team The Panel will receive a report and presentation from the Our Children’s Voice Team who will give an update on the work undertaken by the team on ‘What it feels like to be excluded as a child.’</p>	<p>Visit on 11.3.26</p> <p>Panel on 19th March 2026</p> <p>July – 26/27 municipal year</p>
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<p>Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Transformation Plan</p>	<p>Jo-Anne Sanders</p> <p>Clusters – Jayne Whitton</p> <p>Sufficiency Strategy – S Horn</p> <p>DfE White Paper – J Sanders</p> <p>EHCPs – Jenny Sneideris/ Michelle Lister</p> <p>Ofsted & CQC Inspection – Jo Sanders</p> <p>Adulthood PFA Board – Adrian Wisniewski/Donna Auty</p> <p>PCAN - Carol Thomas/Johanna Hull and Dawn Pitt</p>	<p>The Panel will scrutinise the SEND Transformation Plan and will focus on the following areas –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEND Sufficiency Strategy for Kirklees (2025-2028) • Overview of SEND Tribunals and EHCP Compliance and timescales and the Complaints Process - which will include – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - observation of the decision-making process for EHCP; - a look at the volume processes/quality and compliance (including Annual Reviews) and the multi-agency approach - observation at the EHCP Quality Assurance Multi-Agency meetings - data on complaints/mediation/tribunals against the number of EHCPs - In order to raise the awareness of Panel Members an anonymised EHCP would be shared with the Panel/Vision 360/Self Evaluation and SEN2 publication data • SEND Ofsted and CQC Inspection of Kirklees Local Area Partnership’s provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision – Local Authority Action Plan (to include information on the Liquid Logic Parent Portal) 	<p>Visit on 10th June 2025 to the Places Access and Inclusion Committee of the Education (PAIC)</p> <p>The Panel visited the Places, Access and Inclusion Meeting on the 10th June 2025 to observe the discussions around needs and capacity relating to the teacher workforce. Some of the issues discussed were around</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Additionally Resourced Provision and support for New Mill Junior and Infant to develop 2 site provision within rural areas; - Analysis of sufficiency data and reducing PANs for Primary schools; - The Local Plan and the impact of new development on school sufficiency in certain areas; - Review of the Fair Access Protocol (FAP) which had see 14 schools join a task and finish group; - Capacity for the Committee was a risk, there were now equal levels of permanent exclusions and electively home educated cases and a pressure with the current secondary place bulge as although FAP could override PAN, some schools were already oversubscribed. 	<p>Visit on 10.6.25</p>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DfE White Paper on proposals on SEND Changes (April 26 implementation) • Preparation to Adulthood (PFA) which will include a visit to the PFA Board (date to be confirmed) • Visits to – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SEND Transformation Programme Event on 26th June 2025 - Satellite provision for the two new special schools and Alternative Resource Provisions at Woodley Moor, Overthorpe and New Mill sites - Mainstream schools to observe the practice of the new initiatives of schools working in clusters - Half yearly SEND Event (date to be confirmed) - PCAN (Parent Carer Forum) - Local Offer Live on 23.10.25 - EHCP Quality Assurance Multi-Agency meetings (dates to be confirmed) 	<p>Visit to Cluster meeting at Holmfirth High School on 25th June 2025</p> <p>The Panel visited the cluster meeting at Holmfirth High School and fed back on the following key issues –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Respectful relationships had been built through the year. - Shared training followed up with ideas on how to implement what they had learned. - Clusters had enabled consideration of all-staff training within settings as well as specialist training for staff from multiple settings. - Important to ensure the EHCP Team would accept whole school evidence for the Decision Panels not only specialist assessments. - It was seen as a priority that EHCP Leaders should attend cluster meetings. - Feedback from SENDCO’s was often that they were not clear why refusals had been given and could not get hold of an officer to discuss. - There was a wellbeing element to being able to share cases. - Schools were dealing with incontinence problems and concerns were raised as to what was the most appropriate course to source funding for required adaptations. 	<p>Visit on 25.6.25</p>
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good collaborative atmosphere for teams to come together to gain a deeper understanding of each other's roles and there were useful conversations between sessions. - Good to hear the progress on the 2 new build special schools at Woodley and Joseph Norton. - Progress made on compliance with issuing EHCPs within statutory timescales. - A suggestion was made that some of the training needs of officers and professionals could be met with bitesize options, eg short YouTube videos or TikTok's; - A table discussion highlighted the need for communication styles tailored to the young people and better ways to engage. <p>Visits to observe the Decision-Making process for EHCPs</p> <p>The Panel observed the decision-making process for EHCPs which took place in 3 stages –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Decision to assess Panel on 22nd May</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • multi-disciplinary approach worked well although not all services had been able to attend on the day; • a wide focus for discussion, not only on education but considering factors 	<p>Visit on 22.5.25</p>
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cases that involve placement out of area or private providers are sent to the Service Director for approval and to give strategic oversight • Panel members know the young person and discuss character and preferences as part of decision making • Demand is greater than supply in terms of specialist places, sufficiency concerns were discussed • Panel discussed independent reports, some parents have expressed concerns that these are automatically dismissed • The Panel take an overview of lessons learnt in terms of mainstream inclusion so they are not just considering on a case by case basis <p>Visit on 16th July 2025 to Education and Learning Partnership Board (ELPB) meeting</p> <p>The Panel attended the ELPB meeting and observed the discussions as part of their scrutiny focus on the SEND Transformation Plan. Key points discussed were –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robust response on the need for an Accessibility Strategy • A forum had been formed for feedback on ways of working and questions 	<p>Visit on 16.7.25</p>
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			<p>were being asked early when planning engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed EHCP Quality Assurance (QA) Framework - newer EHCPs were showing better quality and the QA process had highlighted gaps in health and social care advice • There was a monthly review with multi-agency membership that examined a sample of cases • The Service was considering how to build Quality Assurance into Annual Reviews and staff training to raise awareness • Good collaboration with external partners such as Bradford Research School on the Our Kirklees Futures • Early Years Development Board was relaunching and would include school readiness considerations • Survey on Fair Access Protocol had been undertaken and only 22 out of 170 schools responded, further work was taking place to try and understand why schools did not engage and how to reach a wider cohort <p>Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) SEND online event on 28th August 2025</p> <p>The Panel attended an online event organised by the CfGS designed for Local</p>	<p>Visit on 28.8.25</p>
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			<p>Authorities and stakeholders, the event considered the complexities of SEND Scrutiny from legal frameworks and funding models to the real-world impact on children and young people and families. A number of presentations were given by LA Officers, a representative of the National Network of Parent Carers Forum and Councillors involved in scrutiny of SEND.</p> <p>CQC and Ofsted SEND Inspection report – draft action plan – Informal Panel meeting on 29th August 2025 The Panel considered a presentation giving an update on the draft action plan regarding the SEND Inspection Report which was published in August 2025.</p> <p>SEND Sufficiency Strategy for Kirklees (2025-2028) - Panel Meeting on 29th August 2025 The Panel considered and supported the Kirklees SEND Sufficiency for Kirklees 2025-28 and noted the actions undertaken to address some of the issues raised in the report. The Panel agreed to consider future reports when available on the SEND Sufficiency Strategy giving an update on progress and future plans, including an update on the work of the SEND Sufficiency Group.</p>	<p>Panel on 29.8.25</p> <p>Panel on 29.8.25</p>
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			<p>Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Transformation Plan – Informal meeting on 16th September 2025 The Panel met to consider whether the agreed areas of focus needed to be widened and agreed further areas for consideration which have been discussed with Officers.</p> <p>SEND Ofsted and CQC Inspection of Kirklees – Local Authority Action Plan – Panel meeting on 17th October 2025 The Panel considered a report and presentation on the outcome of the Kirklees Local Area Partnership Inspection of SEND and Alternative Provision undertaken in June 2025 by Ofsted and CQC, and the post inspection Action Plan, which was presented by Ian Bennett, ICB Kirklees Place Director of Nursing and Quality.</p> <p>Visit to Local Offer Live on 23rd October 2025 The Panel attended the Local Offer Live event on the 23rd October 2025 which was led by PCAN and was a marketplace with stalls and workshops. The Panel noted that –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It was useful for parents to have multiple services in one place 	<p>Panel on 16.9.25</p> <p>Panel on 17.10.25</p> <p>Visit on 23.10.25</p>
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The event provided excellent opportunities for networking between services. - The Cluster team reported that they had had many productive conversations with parents and carers. - Feedback had been collected and the Panel advised that they would like to have sight of this. <p>Education Health and Care Plans – Compliance, Mediation, Tribunals and complaints and compliments – Panel meeting on 11th December 2025</p> <p>The Panel considered a report on Education Health and Care Plans Compliance, Mediation, Tribunals and complaints and compliments. The Panel asked officers to explore whether data showing the percentage of children in Kirklees who had an EHCP could be provided to give a benchmark with other Local Authorities and that feedback be provided to teams that the Panel had expressed confidence in the work they were undertaking and acknowledged the efforts of the service to improve.</p>	<p>Panel on 11.12.25</p>
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			<p>Update on the anticipated ‘School’s White Paper’ in relation to National Reforms to the SEND System - Panel Meeting on 11th December 2025</p> <p>The Panel considered a presentation on the anticipated ‘Schools White Paper’ in relation to national reforms to the SEND system. The Panel suggested that the Engagement Events being arranged with partners to discuss the White Paper could be sign posted on the Local Offer Site and it was agreed that the Panel would be invited to participate in the engagement events. The white paper was published in February 2026 and was shared with the Panel for information and further consideration.</p> <p>‘The Big Plan’ - Preparation for Adulthood (PFA) – Panel Meeting on 6th February 2026</p> <p>The Panel considered a report on the Preparation for Adulthood (PFA) as outlined in the SEND Code of Practice 2015 and provided an overview of the work that the Local Area Partnership was undertaking to improve as part of the SEND transformation. The Panel agreed to consider the final report on Preparation for Adulthood at a future meeting.</p>	<p>Panel on 11.12.25</p> <p>Panel on 6.2.26</p>
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			<p>Visit to the Preparation for Adulthood (PFA) Board – 24th February 2026</p> <p>The Panel attended a meeting of the PFA Board to observe the arrangements for preparing for adulthood. Initial findings from the recent Peer Review were outlined, which included –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • positive comments about the low NEET rates in Kirklee • strong relationships, effective partnerships and a commitment to inclusion and co-production • Areas for improvement included formalising pathway planning, embedding independence outcomes, strengthening operational links and investing in training and employment pathways. • Work was underway on some of the recommendations, and a plan would be shared when completed. • The Panel noted a presentation on the Post 16 Landscape, which highlighted that although there was extensive Level 3 provision across Kirklees, there was a need for more Entry Level, Level 1 and 2 provision. 	<p>Visit on 24.2.26</p>
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			<p>Visit to Woodley Moor (Satellite provision sites for the two new special schools and Alternative Resource Provisions) – 27th February 2026</p> <p>The Panel visited the satellite provision site at Woodley Moor Children’s Centre, which had been put in place for youngsters whilst the two new special schools were built to provide additionally resourced provision.</p> <p>Key findings were –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodley Moor provided space for up to 25 students. • Classrooms at the Centre were homely and thematic, for example underwater themes. • Children were set by profile not by age or ability which meant putting similar personalities together. • Some rooms had sand pits and soft corners to help children to self-regulate. • Woodley Moor was the only autism school in Kirklees and children would come from all over the District. • Children were taught life skills at the school, such as eating with cutlery, cooking and cleaning. 	<p>Visit on 27.2.26</p>
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			<p>An additional visit would be arranged in April 2026 to satellite site at New Mill Junior School, which had recently opened.</p> <p>Panel meeting on 19th March 2026 – SEND White Paper The Panel will receive a verbal update on the SEND White Paper – Every child achieving and thriving.</p> <p>Visit to Engagement Event on SEND Reforms – 25th March 2026 The Panel will visit the Engagement Event arranged to discuss the proposed SEND Reforms.</p>	<p>Panel on 19.3.26</p> <p>Visit on 25.3.26</p>
<p>Educational Outcomes and Elective Home Education (EHE)</p>	<p>Jo-Anne Sanders/Emma Brayford (key lead)</p> <p>EHE – Christina Marsay and Louise Hallas</p>	<p>The Panel will scrutinise the educational outcomes of children and young people in Kirklees in the following areas –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elective Home Education – to include a visit to meet with Strategic Leads and the Team • Educational Attainment Outcomes -pre-decision scrutiny before considered by Cabinet in 25/26. 	<p>Visit to meet with Elective Home Education (EHE) Strategic Leads and the Team – 9th September 2025</p> <p>The Panel received data provided by Jo-Anne Sanders in September 2024 on Elective Home Education (EHE), which had been shared with Ofsted during the inspection.</p> <p>The Panel met with Strategic EHE Leads in September 2025 and discussed a number of key areas relating to home educating, some of which are listed below -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why parents decided to home educate 	<p>Visit on 9.9.25</p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Engagement between schools and families took place when possible before a decision was made to home educate- Workload in the team was a challenge but measures were being taken to put systems in place to assist- No current legal requirement for a parent to inform the Local Authority that they were going to home educate, but safeguarding procedures were in place and if a child was not on a school roll the team would liaise with School Admissions- Home schooling became common during the pandemic but parents seemed now more wary, the team worked with families to support them to get children back into school rather than use formal processes if appropriate- Some parents say they could teach a primary aged child but not secondary- Parents were encouraged to talk to the team before making a decision to home educate- Good working relationships were in place with Front Door and intelligence was shared- The team worked hard to build relationships with schools and families	
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			<p>- The Panel suggested that feedback could be sought from parents when their children returned to school</p> <p>Educational Attainment Outcomes – Informal Panel meeting on 17th October 2025</p> <p>The Panel considered an overview of the statutory outcomes achieved by learners in Kirklees during the academic year 2024-2025. The report covered outcomes at the end of the Foundation Stage, Phonics (Year 1), Key Stage 2 (Year 6), Key Stage 4 (GCSE) and Key Stage 5 (Post-16). The Panel noted that the results and national comparisons provided in this report were subject to validation and reflective of the data available in September 2025.</p>	<p>Panel on 17.10.25</p>
<p>Partnership Arrangements</p>	<p>Vicky Metherringham/Jo-Anne Sanders</p>	<p>The Panel will continue to scrutinise partnerships and boards during the 2025/26 municipal year, for example, Kirklees Parenting Board and Health and Wellbeing Board, visits to internal teams and partners and the Panel can look at how data was collected and used to improve outcomes. The Panel can be represented at meetings, events and visits to internal teams and external providers and agree to focus on the following areas:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection • Partnership working 	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the voice of the young person being heard? (as below) • Good practice • Delivery of quality service 		
Voice of the Young Person	Tom Brailsford/Service Directors (Children’s Service)	The Panel will keep a watching brief on all areas of scrutiny by the Panel and explore whether the voice of the child was being heard, whether they are empowered to speak up and ensure that lessons have and are being learned.	Ongoing	Ongoing
Health Provision for Children and Young People and the impact of the ICB changes on services	Emily Parry-Harries from Public Health Tom Brailsford/Jess Barclay-Lambert, Children and Families	<p>The Panel will scrutinise the health provision for Children and Young People in Kirklees with a particular focus on the following –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional Wellbeing Provision for children in Kirklees and Mental Health in schools - to scrutinise the provision of service and seek feedback from service users and consider fluctuation in waiting lists and trends for children’s emotional health and wellbeing to include an update on the implementation of the Keeping Kirklees in Mind service. • Impact of the Integrated Care Board (ICB) changes on services - The Lead Member will review the changes at the ICB and the impact on mental health services for children and young people in Kirklees. 	<p>Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel 4th March 2026</p> <p>The Chair of the Panel observed a discussion at the Health and Adult Social Care Panel on the 4th March 2026 when officers from the Integrated Care Board (ICB) attended to give a presentation on the ICB changes and how they would affect Kirklees. The following key points in relation to Children were highlighted –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local NHS and council partners were working together to improve support for children and young people, especially those with SEND, aiming for fair and consistent services across West Yorkshire. • New roles and service plans were being developed to ensure children received timely assessments and Education, Health & Care Plans. 	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite changes to NHS staffing, frontline services for children should continue as normal, with improvements expected through better neighbourhood-based support. • Community groups and families would continue to shape services through strong involvement of the voluntary sector and patient feedback. • Access to children’s dental care had already improved and this work would continue. <p>Lead Member Briefing – 9th March 2026 The Lead Member received an update on the impact of the ICB changes to mental health provision for children and young people and the following key points were highlighted –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAMHS commissioning would no longer be the responsibility of the ICB, but instead would be carried out by Place Provider Partnerships. • For Kirklees the commissioning body would be the South West Yorkshire Mental Health Trust. • This work would be led by the, Head of Service Commissioning Quality & Health Partnerships, and the Lead Member agreed to receive future updates on the commissioning arrangements as they developed. 	
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<p>Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)</p>	<p>Jo-Anne Sanders/Emma Brayford/Mark Janes (Chair of SACRE rmijanes@aol.com) and Emma Salter, Pennine Learning (PL), Education Consultant and Jake Womack, PL Director</p>	<p>The Panel will scrutinise the work of the Kirklees Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) which includes partnership working with other regional local authorities and consider the Annual Report in February each year.</p>	<p>Annual Report on Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) – Panel meeting on 6th February 2026 The Panel will consider SACRE’s Annual Report.</p>	<p>Panel on 6.2.26</p>
<p>Lead Member Briefings (Bi-monthly LM Briefings with Cabinet Members for Learning and Children’s; and Strategic Director/Service Directors in Children’s Services during 25/26) – Actions from these meetings will be included within the Panel’s Work Programme where appropriate</p>				
<p>Staff Vacancies in the Assessment and Intervention Service (Children’s Services)</p>	<p>Vicky Metherringham</p>	<p>The Lead Member will receive an update on the current staff vacancies in the Assessment and Intervention Service.</p>	<p>The Lead Member received an update in February 2026 on the current vacancies within the Assessment and Intervention Service which included the following key points –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Service operated as a north and south cluster but due to the current situation where one cluster was experiencing more vacancies, the service were working as one to support caseload management. • Multiple routes had been introduced into social work as the service anticipated how vacancies could be managed effectively. • Recruitment plans were underway to fill the vacancies which included progression from apprenticeships into vacant posts and staff transitioning 	

			<p>from the Frontline programme to become newly qualified workers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Robust oversight of social workers caseloads and arrangements were in place to ensure that social workers were well supported.• The service routinely sampled social work practice to provide assurance about the quality of practice.• The Senior Leadership Team were invested in ensuring that social workers knew they were valued and cared for.	
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Children's Scrutiny Panel

Agenda Plan 2025/26

Date of Meeting	Issues for Consideration	Officer Contact
<p>13th June 2025</p> <p>Workshop - Informal Meeting</p>	<p>(with Panel, Officers and Cabinet Members)</p> <p>To consider potential areas of focus for the Panel during 2025/26 municipal year which will include the Council's key priorities for the children's service.</p>	<p>Helen Kilroy</p>
<p>8th August 2025</p> <p>Informal meeting 9.30am-10.30am</p> <p>Public meeting 10.30am</p> <p>Hybrid meeting Council Chamber HTH</p> <p>Report deadline: 25.07.2025</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Informal Items:-</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Children's Service Data Performance Report</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Public Items:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Minutes of meeting on 28.04.2025</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Cabinet Priorities 25/26</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Performance Highlights (verbal)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Pre-decision Scrutiny – Cabinet decisions on the horizon</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Feedback from Panel Members on issues considered by Kirklees Parenting Board</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Work Programme and Agenda Plan for 25/26</p>	<p>Service Directors to present</p> <p>H Kilroy</p> <p>Cllr Kendrick and Cllr Rylah</p> <p>Service Directors to present</p> <p>Senior Officers/Cabinet Members</p> <p>Panel Members</p> <p>H Kilroy</p>

Date of Meeting	Issues for Consideration	Officer Contact
<p>29th August 2025</p> <p>Informal meeting 9.30am-10.30am Public meeting 10.30am Hybrid meeting Council Chamber HTH</p> <p>Report deadline: 15.08.2025</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Informal Items:-</p> <p style="text-align: center;">No data report due to timescales</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SEND Inspection report – draft action plan</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Public Items:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SEND Sufficiency Strategy for Kirklees 2025-28</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Pre-decision Scrutiny – Cabinet decisions on the horizon</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Feedback from Panel Members on issues considered by Kirklees Parenting Board</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Work Programme and Agenda Plan for 25/26</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">J Sanders</p> <p style="text-align: center;">J Sanders</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Senior Officers/Cabinet Members</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Panel Members</p> <p style="text-align: center;">H Kilroy</p>
<p>16th September 2025</p> <p>Informal meeting 4pm Online on Teams</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Discussion on whether to widen Panel’s agreed areas of focus on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Transformation Plan</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">H Kilroy/C Gardiner</p>
<p>17th October 2025</p> <p>Informal meeting 9.30am-10.30am Public meeting 10.30am Hybrid meeting Council Chamber HTH</p> <p>Report deadline: 03.10.2025</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Informal Items:-</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Educational Outcomes (unvalidated data)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ambition Board Minutes – 29.09.25</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Children’s Service Data Performance Report</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Public Items:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SEND Ofsted and CQC Inspection of Kirklees – Local Authority Action Plan</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">J Sanders</p> <p style="text-align: center;">W Harris to provide</p> <p style="text-align: center;">J Sanders/V Metheringham to present</p> <p style="text-align: center;">J Sanders, S Horn, A Wisniewski, & Ian Bennett (ICB), Vicky Dutchburn</p>

Date of Meeting	Issues for Consideration	Officer Contact
	<p>Performance Highlights (verbal)</p> <p>Pre-decision Scrutiny – Cabinet decisions on the horizon</p> <p>Feedback from Panel Members on issues considered by Kirklees Parenting Board</p> <p>Work Programme and Agenda Plan for 25/26</p>	<p>J Sanders/V Metheringham</p> <p>Senior Officers/Cabinet Members</p> <p>Panel Members</p> <p>H Kilroy</p>
<p>11th December 2025</p> <p>Informal meeting 9.30am-10.30am</p> <p>Public meeting 10.30am</p> <p>Hybrid meeting Council Chamber HTH</p> <p>Report deadline: 27.11.2025</p>	<p>Informal Items:-</p> <p>Children’s Service Data Performance Report</p> <p>Public Items:</p> <p>Update on the forthcoming DfE White Paper (Proposals for SEND reforms)</p> <p>SEND Tribunals and EHCP Compliance (to include an overview of the complaints process)</p> <p>Performance Highlights (verbal)</p> <p>Pre-decision Scrutiny – Cabinet decisions on the horizon</p> <p>Feedback from Panel Members on issues considered by Kirklees Parenting Board</p> <p>Work Programme and Agenda Plan for 25/26</p>	<p>J Sanders/V Metheringham</p> <p>J Sanders</p> <p>Jenny Sneideris/ Michelle Lister/ J Sanders</p> <p>J Sanders/V Metheringham</p> <p>Senior Officers/Cabinet Members</p> <p>Panel Members</p> <p>H Kilroy</p>
<p>6th February 2026</p> <p>Informal meeting 9.30am-10.30am</p> <p>Public meeting 10.30am</p> <p>Hybrid meeting</p>	<p>Informal Items:-</p> <p>Ambition Board Minutes – 01.12.25</p> <p>Children’s Service Data Performance Report</p>	<p>W Harris to provide</p> <p>J Sanders/V Metheringham/ to present</p>

Date of Meeting	Issues for Consideration	Officer Contact
<p>Council Chamber HTH</p> <p>Report deadline: 23.01.2026</p>	<p>Public Items:</p> <p>Annual report for Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)</p> <p>Preparation for Adulthood (PFA)</p> <p>Multi-agency developments around the Children’s Social Care Reforms (verbal)</p> <p>Performance Highlights (verbal)</p> <p>Pre-decision Scrutiny – Cabinet decisions on the horizon</p> <p>Work Programme and Agenda Plan for 25/26</p>	<p>E Brayford/J Sanders and Mark Janes (Chair) Pennine Learning/Emma Salter</p> <p>J Sanders</p> <p>R Fordyce/Ann Fransen/Carol/Ann Smith</p> <p>J Sanders/V Metheringham to present</p> <p>Senior Officers/Cabinet Members</p> <p>H Kilroy</p>
<p>19th March 2026</p> <p>Informal meeting 9.30am-10.30am Public meeting 10.30am Hybrid meeting Council Chamber HTH</p> <p>Report deadline: 05.03.2026</p> <p>Pre-election period 13.3 to 7.5</p>	<p>Informal Items:-</p> <p>Children’s Service Data Performance Report</p> <p>Public items</p> <p>NO PUBLIC QUESTION TIME</p> <p>White paper on the SEND Reforms – verbal update</p> <p>Oversight of the Ofsted Improvement Plan</p> <p>Re-design of the Leaving Care Service</p> <p>Pre-decision Scrutiny – Cabinet decisions on the horizon</p>	<p>J Sanders/V Metheringham to present</p> <p>Tom Brailsford/Jo Sanders</p> <p>V Metheringham/Robert Fordyce</p> <p>V Metheringham/J Hanna</p> <p>Senior Officers/Cabinet Members</p>

Date of Meeting	Issues for Consideration	Officer Contact
	<p data-bbox="472 156 1637 188">Feedback from Panel Members on issues considered by Kirklees Parenting Board</p> <p data-bbox="734 228 1375 300">Work Programme and Agenda Plan for 25/26 (progress and items to roll forward to 26/27)</p>	<p data-bbox="1800 156 2029 188">Panel Members</p> <p data-bbox="1854 228 1975 260">H Kilroy</p>

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