

WESTMORLAND AND FURNESS COUNCIL

Cabinet

Report Title	Children's Social Care Improvement and Development Plan 2023-24
Date of Meeting	12 September 2023
Report Author	Jonathan Taylor, AD Children and Families
Director	Milorad Vasic, Director of Children's Services
Lead Cabinet Member	Councillor Sue Sanderson – Children's Services, Education & Skills
Why is this a key decision?	<p>1. Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the Council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates. For these purposes, savings and expenditure are "significant" if they are equal to or greater than £500,000 and/or – NO</p> <p>2. Is likely to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising one or more wards in the area of the Council – NO</p>
Wards Affected	All
Identify exempt information and exemption category	Not applicable
Reasons for urgency (only where applicable)	Not applicable
Appendices (if any)	Appendix A Children's Social Care Improvement and Development Plan 2023 - 24

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This paper sets out, at Appendix A, the Children's Social Care Improvement and Development Plan for 2023 – 24.
- 1.2 This plan incorporates actions resulting from the Ofsted inspection in Cumbria, undertaken in September 2022 under the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework, as well as other priority areas identified to drive improvement.

2. Recommendations

For the reasons set out in this report, Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Approve the Children's Social Care Improvement and Development Plan 2023-24 attached in Appendix A.

3. Information: the Rationale & Evidence for the Recommendations

- 3.1 Children's social care are subject to inspection by Ofsted, under the ILACS framework. The last full inspection occurred in September 2022, on a Cumbria footprint. The overall judgement was 'requires improvement', notably with the sub judgement relating to children looked after and care leavers judged as 'good'. As a result of this inspection, a number of priority areas for improvement were identified which are captured within this plan.
- 3.2 It is critical for us in a new Westmorland and Furness local authority, to review and develop the previous Cumbria plan to align with our priorities and local context. This plan identifies the actions we will be delivering to drive our ongoing improvement and deliver our aspiration to be validated externally as providing consistently 'good' services for children, young people and families.

4. Link to Council Plan Priorities: (People, Climate, Communities, Economy and Culture, Customers, Workforce)

- 4.1 People, Communities, Customers – the improvement plan contributes to the Council Plan priorities relating to people, communities, customers by driving ongoing improvement of our children's social care services.

5. Alternative Options Considered

- 5.1 Members can approve the plan or request amendments.

6. Financial Implications and risk

- 6.2 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendation to approve the Children's Social Care Improvement and Development Plan. The plan does not commit the Council to significant expenditure that cannot be funded from within the Service's existing budget.
- 6.3 Although not the main driver for their inclusion, there are a number in themes in the plan which, if delivered successfully, will help manage the two largest potential budget pressure areas in Children's Social Care: Children Looked After placement costs and staff costs.
- 6.4 Placement sufficiency is very challenging nationally and regionally. Theme 16: Sufficiency of provision sets out actions in this area. Other themes including 14 Edge of care practice also have the potential to help manage CLA placement cost budget pressures by reducing the number of children entering care.
- 6.5 Social work recruitment and retention is also a national issue which has impacted on budget pressures in recent years by increasing reliance on agency workers in some area of the service and driving up rates charged by agencies. Recruitment and retention are addressed in Theme 3: Developing the workforce.

7. Legal and Governance Implications

- 7.1 Cabinet is empowered to approve the Children's Social Care Improvement and Development Plan for 2023 – 24 in accordance with Part 2 – Section 4, paragraph 1 of the Constitution.
- 7.2 In accordance with Part 2 – Section 4 paragraph 3.1.5 of the Constitution, Cabinet is responsible for determining policies and objectives for any Council services, within their remit, reviewing the extent to which they are met and agreeing any necessary action.
- 7.3 Further, in accordance with Part 2 – Section 4 paragraph 3.1.7 of the Constitution, Cabinet is responsible for ensuring the effective and efficient management of any service and resources within their remit and where appropriate, the effective and efficient discharge of the responsibilities of any subordinate bodies or person.
- 7.4 The Council is required to meet its statutory legal duties in relation to the delivery of Children's Services. This report provides the details of the plans and improvements proposed to address the Ofsted inspection and to ensure compliance with statutory duties and to also meet the Council priorities.

In September 2022, the Shadow Authority resolved that Westmorland and Furness Council would recognise care experienced people as a protected characteristic. This social care improvement and development plan contributes to this ethos, focussing on the experiences and progress of care leavers to improve transitions to adulthood, consistency of practice, supporting young care leavers to stay in touch and to secure positive engagement with education training and employment. It includes a plan to review and refresh the local offer for care leavers.

8. Human Resources Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct HR implications to consider from the recommendation to approve the Children's Social Care Improvement and Development Plan. HR support will be required to ensure that we are able to fulfil the plans to develop the W&F Children's social work workforce, to ensure successful retention of existing staff and provide an attractive recruitment package. This will include both the HR advisory service and ODWT. Support from HR should also be sought for any action with a potential impact on staff.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications (including the public sector equality duty, Armed Forces Families, Care Leavers and Health inequalities implications)

10. Background Documents

- 10.1 [Ofsted Inspection of Cumbria local authority children's services 20 September 2022](#)