



HILLINGDON
LONDON



Children, Families and Education Select Committee

Councillors on the Committee

Councillor Heena Makwana (Chair)
Councillor Ekta Gohil (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Kishan Bhatt
Councillor Peter Smallwood OBE
Councillor Jan Sweeting (Opposition Lead)
Councillor Tony Gill
Councillor Narinder Garg

Co-Opted Member

Tony Little, Roman Catholic Diocesan
Representative

Date: WEDNESDAY, 7 JANUARY
2026

Time: 7.00 PM

Venue: COMMITTEE ROOM 6 -
CIVIC CENTRE, HIGH
STREET, UXBRIDGE UB8
1UW

**Meeting
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Terms of Reference

Children, Families, & Education Select Committee

To undertake the overview and scrutiny role in relation to the following Cabinet Member portfolio(s) and service areas:

Portfolio(s)	Directorate	Service Areas
Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education	Children's Services	Children's Social Care (incl. safeguarding & corporate parenting)
		Corporate Parenting Panel
		Prevention & Youth Justice (incl. youth services, stronger families and adolescent mental health)
		Education & SEND (incl. Adult & Community Learning, Skills, Lifelong Learning, Music Services and School Travel)
	Adult Services & Health	Children and Families Support Services (incl. Early Years and Children's Centres)

Corporate Parenting

This Select Committee will establish a Panel to support strong oversight of the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities. The Committee may appoint 3 Members to this Panel based on political balance. Membership may include non-Cabinet Members not on the Committee. The Committee may also appoint relevant Council officers and other external stakeholders to the Panel and agree its chairmanship and operation. In agreeing its operation, the Committee will provide for the Panel not to be able to establish any other sub-group or body to carry out its responsibilities.

Agenda

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Minutes

CHILDREN, FAMILIES & EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE

13 November 2025



Meeting held at Committee Room 6 – Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge, UB8 1UW

	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillor Heena Makwana (Chair), Councillor Ekta Gohil (Vice-Chair), Councillor Peter Smallwood OBE, Councillor Kishan Bhatt, Councillor Jan Sweeting (Opposition Lead), Councillor Tony Gill, and Councillor Narinder Garg</p> <p>Co-Opted Member Present: Mr Tony Little</p> <p>Councillors Present: Councillor Colleen Sullivan, Fostering & Permanence Panel representative</p> <p>Officers Present: Julie Kelly (Corporate Director of Children's Services) Tehseen Kauser (Director of Children's Social Care) Alex Coman (Director of Children's Safeguarding & Care) Abi Preston (Director of Education & SEND) Andy Goodwin (Head of Strategic Finance & Deputy S151 Officer) Luisa Hansen (Head of Finance, Children's & SEND), Poppy Reddy (Assistant Director for Care, Support and Transition) Donna Hugh (Assistant Director of Care Provision Services) Kathryn Angelini (Assistant Director for Education) Lisa Steel (Virtual School Headteacher) Natalie Craig (Service Manager – Care Delivery) Ryan Dell (Democratic Services Officer)</p>
35.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
36.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
37.	<p>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed</p>
38.	<p>TO CONFIRM THAT THE ITEMS OF BUSINESS MARKED AS PART I WILL BE</p>

	<p>CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT THE ITEMS MARKED AS PART II WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p>
39.	<p>BUDGET & SPENDING REPORT (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>Officers introduced the report, noting that it was the third time this report had been presented to the Committee.</p> <p>There had been an adverse movement of £200k, primarily due to the increased cost of care rather than an increase in demand. The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) had shown no further adverse movement, which was considered positive, and forecasting was described as accurate and robust at this stage.</p> <p>Officers expressed confidence in the savings plan, noting that the vast majority of planned savings were expected to be achieved.</p> <p>£273,000 savings remained under review, linked to increasing residential provision. Officers anticipated that, subject to Ofsted registration of the new provision, these savings would be achieved by the end of the financial year. Ofsted had visited the new provision, and the Council awaited their decision.</p> <p>Members asked if the service area would need to declare a budget deficit for the next year, noting that savings had been made but offset by overspends, particularly in care costs. Members also asked about the plan of action leading up to December Cabinet and February budget. Officers noted that the situation was challenging, with the cost of care being the main driver of overspends. Officers were going through STAR Chambers, and efforts were ongoing to increase residential provision and to reduce costs. Regular meetings and proposals were in place to address the overspend, but the final budget position was still uncertain. Officers expressed reasonable confidence in reducing costs but could not confirm the final outcome at this stage.</p> <p>Officers confirmed that the budget for 2026/27 was being prepared for Cabinet consideration on 18 December, with a further report scheduled for the Select Committee in January. There was uncertainty regarding government funding allocations, with final figures expected after the Cabinet meeting. This was typical of recent years and made it difficult to predict the budget position.</p> <p>Members referred to the DSG overspend of £12 million and requested an audit of in-house SEND capacity and capital works, noting that a lot of work had been ongoing in this area. Officers advised that there was an annual update on the SEND Sufficiency Strategy upcoming, with capital projects underway, particularly in secondary provision.</p> <p>Members also asked about progress on the inclusivity agenda and support for schools. There had been positive trends in mainstream placements and ongoing work with schools to support inclusion, including outreach projects, and work with the Centre for ADHD and Autism.</p> <p>Members asked about feedback from the DfE regarding Hillingdon's progress in reducing the DSG deficit. Officers noted that the Council had received positive recognition from the DfE for its financial efficiency and improved outcomes. While the safety valve project had closed to new Local Authorities, further information on payments and new programmes was expected. The Committee commended officers and the team for their achievements.</p>

	<p>Members asked whether schools were delivering the same service with less money due to changes in banding. Officers explained that the new banding model, developed with school leaders and a specialist consultant, focused on group support, where appropriate, rather than one-to-one provision, which was no longer considered effective as the standard approach to support, and recognised feedback from young people who reinforced this. Funding per hour had increased, but the approach was more flexible and needs-based. Some schools had seen decreases in funding, others had seen increases, depending on individual needs. All children will have transferred over to the new banding by the end of the financial year, which would help with future planning. The transition had generally been well received by schools, though some out-of-borough schools had found it more challenging due to not being part of the development of the framework.</p> <p>Members asked about the use of capitalisation to reduce overspend and plans to phase this out. Officers clarified that transformation capitalisation was used for activities generating ongoing savings. The government had extended the use of these powers to March 2028. The Council reviewed this provision often to ensure compliance and value for money, with ongoing review in line with government policy.</p> <p>Members asked how the Council ensured that concentrating on in-borough provision did not dilute quality for vulnerable children. Officers advised that in-borough provision allowed for closer oversight and partnership with schools, leading to high standards. Independent provision did not necessarily equate to higher quality, and in-borough placements also reduced travel and maintained community links for young people.</p> <p>Members asked about providing additional accommodation, including the distribution of children's homes across the borough. Officers explained that location assessments were rigorous, considering safety, access to transport, and education. The needs of young people were always considered. Not all children could be placed in-borough for safety reasons. The current and planned provision was expected to balance the need for in-borough placements and reduce reliance on external providers, with benefits for children's wellbeing and community integration. In-borough provision often mean young people can be closer to their school, GP and families.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the 2025/26 Month 5 budget monitoring position.</p>
40.	<p>ANNUAL PERFORMANCE MONITORING (<i>Agenda Item 6</i>)</p> <p>Officers introduced the annual performance report, noting that it was now presented in a new, clearer format. The report provided benchmarking for 2024-25. Officers advised that a bi-annual update would follow soon to ensure data remained current. The report highlighted areas of strong performance, cost-effectiveness, pressure points, and areas for improvement, particularly in placement sufficiency and demand management.</p> <p>Members commended the presentation of the report, noting it as clear, concise and easy to read.</p> <p>Members queried the reasons behind the increase in the number of children on child protection plans, which had risen to 240. Officers explained that this reflected both increased demand and complexity within families, as well as fluctuations due to family size. The number of child protection plans had remained relatively stable over the year, with no unusual demographic changes. Officers also noted that while the number of child protection investigations was high, work was ongoing to ensure appropriate</p>

intervention levels and to avoid unnecessary intrusion into family life.

Members noted social worker vacancy rates and recruitment challenges, highlighting that this was a national issue. Officers reported that the situation had improved over the past year, with a reduction in vacancies due to successful recruitment and retention initiatives including the London Pledge, improved internal conditions, and enhanced training and support. The Council had also benefited from apprenticeship programmes and a focus on developing newly qualified staff. Officers emphasised the importance of workplace culture and support in retaining staff, given that pay rates were broadly similar across London.

Members asked about the robustness and accuracy of the data underpinning the report. Officers advised that significant progress had been made in data quality, with high levels of confidence in the figures presented. Dashboards were regularly reviewed, and any anomalies were quickly identified and addressed. Officers acknowledged that occasional data entry errors could occur but stated that overall confidence was much higher than in previous years.

Members referenced the Council's performance in reducing the number of young people classified as NEET, particularly in comparison to neighbouring boroughs. Hillingdon had implemented a team of NEET trackers, resulting in a significantly lower proportion of "not known" cases compared to the London average. The Council was focusing on early intervention, vocational options, and supporting young people before they left secondary school.

The Committee noted that while the Council had succeeded in reducing first-time entrants to the youth justice system, there was some concern that the reoffending rate among those already in the system remained high. Officers acknowledged this, though explained that the small cohort size skewed the percentages, and that the actual number of offences was low. The Council had undertaken detailed analysis with the Youth Justice Partnership Board and had implemented early intervention and diversion initiatives at police stations to address reoffending.

Members commended the take-up of early years free childcare places and noted the benefits for families.

Members asked about the underperformance in the completion rate of EHCPs within the 20-week target, and the associated costs of delays, including compensation and tribunal cases. Officers responded that most tribunal challenges related to parental preference for schools rather than delays in plan completion. The Council had focused on mediation to reduce tribunal cases and had improved its 20-week completion rate, now performing better than the national average. Additional staff had been allocated to assessments, and ongoing improvements were being made as part of the improvement plan.

Members asked how financial pressures were affecting the delivery of new local government outcomes and priorities, including health and wellbeing. Officers stated that, while this was primarily a matter for other committees, financial constraints had not prevented the Council from delivering required services. Instead, they had encouraged more innovative and collaborative approaches with partners and better use of local assets. The impact of future funding settlements and reforms were awaited.

Members noted two areas of concern – placement sufficiency and reoffending within

	<p>the Youth Justice service.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Noted the Annual Performance Report for 2024/25, as attached in Appendix 1; and 2. Delegated comments for inclusion in the Annual Performance Report to Full Council, to the Democratic Services Officer in conjunction with the Chair and in consultation with the Opposition Lead
41.	<p>CARED FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE STRATEGY (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>)</p> <p>Officers introduced the Cared For Children & Young People Strategy, noting that it formalised existing practices and provided a clear and accessible framework for improving outcomes for children in care and care experienced young people. The strategy set out the Council's responsibilities, priorities, and actions to strengthen support for young people, particularly through their journey in care and transition into adulthood. Officers emphasised the vision that every child and young person in care should have the same opportunities as any other child, with a focus on stability, well-being, and successful transitions into adulthood.</p> <p>Officers highlighted the importance of language, noting that terminology had been updated in response to feedback from young people. For example, the terms "cared for children" and "care experienced young people" were now used, and references to "cases" and "placements" had been replaced with "children" and "homes." The strategy had been co-produced with young people, partners, and professionals, ensuring that their voices were central to its development.</p> <p>Members welcomed the strategy and its ambitions, particularly the involvement of young people in its development.</p> <p>Members asked how the Council inspired ambition and achievement among cared for children and whether this was driven by foster carers, corporate initiatives, or a collective approach. Officers advised that promoting aspiration was a collective responsibility, involving everyone in the young person's life, including carers, teachers, and the wider Council. Officers described various initiatives, such as employing care experienced young people, involving them in events and interview panels, and providing opportunities to develop skills and independence. The Virtual School and Participation Team also played key roles in supporting aspirations, both academic and vocational.</p> <p>Members noted the change in language and asked what alternative terminology young people preferred. Officers explained that while some young people disliked some of the terminology, some phrases (such as looked after children) had to be used for statutory and legal purposes. The Council continued to work with young people to refine language and ensure it reflected their preferences, with the strategy remaining in draft form to accommodate ongoing feedback.</p> <p>Members asked about youth justice and reoffending. Officers reported that significant work had been undertaken to reduce reoffending, including diversionary activities and partnership working. The Council had established high-risk panels to collectively plan for young people known to youth justice services, focusing on early intervention and prevention. The creation of a specialist adolescent service was also highlighted as a</p>

	<p>key development in supporting at-risk young people.</p> <p>Members commended the comprehensive nature of the strategy and stressed the importance of regular review, suggesting that the voices of young people should be heard more frequently than annually. Officers confirmed that regular checks and balances were in place, including independent reviews and ongoing engagement with young people.</p> <p>Members also asked about the long-term outcomes for care experienced young people after leaving care. The Council was committed to supporting care experienced young people into independence through pathway plans, the Staying Close scheme, and ongoing contact and support up to age 25 (and beyond in some cases, such as for those in education). Officers described efforts to maintain relationships and provide guidance, with additional support for those with complex needs and transitions to adult services. It was also important to note that the transition to adulthood started prior to turning 18.</p> <p>Members highlighted the importance of health and wellbeing, particularly mental health support for care experienced young people, and asked about access to services and partnership working with the NHS. Officers acknowledged the challenges in accessing mental health services and described regular communication with CAMHS and NHS colleagues to promote access. The Council also utilised independent therapeutic services, such as Ask Jan, which provided six counselling sessions for care experienced young people. There were also close relationships with the ICB. Officers emphasised the importance of positive relationships and early intervention, including the use of strengths and difficulties questionnaires to identify needs and to refer young people for additional support, including to MAPS, where needed. The Council maintained a continuum of care, from early intervention to specialist services, and worked closely with health partners to ensure timely support.</p> <p>Members commended officers; noted the report; and noted that comments would be produced.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Noted the strategic direction and priorities outlined in the draft strategy; and 2. Delegated comments to the Democratic Services Officer in conjunction with the Chair and in consultation with the Opposition Lead
42.	<p>FOSTERING REVIEW – WITNESS SESSION 1 (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>)</p> <p>Officers introduced the fostering offer in Hillingdon, including information on recruitment, support, achievements, impact, and future plans.</p> <p>The fostering offer had been launched in May 2024 to improve recruitment and retention of foster carers and outcomes for cared for children. Hillingdon had established a strong community, or ‘village’, for children. This including recruiting the best possible carers for young people as this is what the young people deserved.</p> <p>Recruitment of foster carers had been highly successful, with over a 120% increase in inquiries compared to the previous year. Hillingdon was also part of the West London</p>

Fostering Hub, and had received some of the highest number of inquiries (127) among eight local authorities.

Over 20% of inquiries converted to expressions of interest, while most rejections were due to unsuitable requests or living arrangements.

The Care Friends app had been introduced in September to incentivise foster carers to promote recruitment, with other boroughs consulting with Hillingdon on its strategy.

There were currently 78 fostering households, with 13 more expected to be approved by the end of the financial year. Of these, 34 were single carers with the remainder being couples.

The service aimed to widen ethnicity and religious representation of foster carers, reflecting Hillingdon's diversity. Over 50% were from the global majority.

Age ranges of foster carers were broad, ranging from 20 to 80 years old. The longest-serving foster carer had been with Hillingdon for 40 years.

Twelve connected carers provided family link fostering for 17 children, contributing to the sufficiency strategy.

Specialist placements, including parent and child placements, were being developed. There was currently one parent-and-child carer, with growth in this area anticipated.

Foster carers could receive up to £1,500 per week for children with higher or more complex needs, alongside annual energy bill contributions, Council Tax reductions, and reimbursement of Merlin passes.

Trauma-informed training was provided, including access to over 100 online and in-person courses, with additional consultations from the MAPS team.

Recruitment used real-life stories and digital tools to attract carers from diverse backgrounds.

Foster carers were celebrated through events and award schemes, including appreciation events and long-service awards. This included awards for resilience, sibling support, community impact, exceptional care, and two long service awards for 10- and 40- years service. The 'Star by Far Award' had been introduced bi-monthly to recognise carers going above and beyond.

Feedback was regularly sought from carers, children, and professionals to highlight positive relationships and experiences.

All cared for children aged 2–18 had an allocated education officer in the virtual school team, who would lead their Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings, which also involved foster carers, social workers, and designated teachers, to celebrate successes, note areas of praise and development, and set SMART targets. The voice of foster carers was very important in these meetings, and it was noted that children who were living with foster families tended to have better outcomes than those who did not. The Virtual School worked alongside the foster team and could address any school issues affecting the home. This ensured a holistic approach and stability for the young person.

The Virtual School helped designated teachers understand the journey of a child in care and the importance of the foster experience. Furthermore, the Virtual School provided training for designated teachers and foster carers, including sessions on resilience, transitions and caring for children with challenging behaviours.

Officers emphasised the importance of both recruitment and retention of foster carers. Specialist recruitment was being developed for carers able to support children with disabilities and adolescents, as this was where a need was seen.

The Care Offer approach aimed to ensure residential care was a step, not a destination for young people, with transitions to family environments prioritised wherever possible.

Officers were also looking into recruiting out of hours foster carers as, due to being a port authority, young people can arrive at Heathrow at any time and so this could help avoid the young people having to stay in the airport. This would also assist with young people who become looked after.

A fostering placement coordinator role was being piloted to optimise matching of children and carers.

The Mockingbird scheme was a license scheme that provided a hub for a group of foster carers who are supported by experienced foster carers in how to care for young people. The scheme had been piloted and was under review for future expansion.

Members asked about support for foster carers experiencing challenges, such as when placements triggered personal challenges. Officers advised that the assessment process was intensive and could last eight to nine months, with training, including trauma-informed training, provided throughout the assessment period. This training model was the same as that for residential homes, and feedback on the training had been positive. The MAPS service supported both children and foster carers, helping carers understand and respond to challenging behaviours. The supportive relationship between foster carers and their supervising social workers was important as the social workers could assist in supporting the foster carers when young people moved on after their placement.

Officers were re-launching the buddy system of peer support, and coffee mornings and events were available. New foster carers coming through were from diverse backgrounds and this helped with peer support.

Members asked about the inclusion of LGBTQ+ carers, and about instances of carers entering and leaving relationships. Hillingdon did not discriminate and had recruited same-sex couples and single carers. There had been instances of foster carers entering and leaving relationships, and support was provided for carers experiencing life changes, with consideration for the needs of children in placement. There were also annual reviews and updated assessments for changes in household composition. These changes could also be referred to the Fostering & Permanence Panel.

Members asked about placements for young people with potentially prejudiced backgrounds. Officers explained the matching process, which considered personality, culture, religion, identity, and perceptions. These profiles were shared with potential carers. Transition periods and dialogue were used to ensure suitability, with support from supervising social workers and the MAPS team.

	<p>Members asked about the Care Friends app and ensuring safeguarding. Officers explained that the app had been launched originally and been popular in Wales, and it had led to a 30% increase in update of recruitment of foster carers. It also allowed foster carers to be actively involved in the recruitment process. Locally, it had been launched at the recent Foster Care Appreciation event. It also aided in strategic recruitment and the need for specialist carers, and officers were currently assessing a potential carer who had come via the app from an agency. There were small cash incentives for using the app. Word of mouth was also an important promotional method. Safeguarding was ensured through rigorous assessment processes, with no details of any young people shared via the app.</p> <p>Members commended officers and asked how the Committee could add value given the rapid progress in fostering. Officers welcomed scrutiny and input from Members, emphasising the importance of community engagement and feedback. The Committee was encouraged to help promote recruitment and retention, and to provide insights from their constituencies, as well as their own insights. Officers also highlighted the upcoming witness sessions with foster carers and young people, who would also give useful feedback.</p> <p>Members asked how many foster carers were needed. Foster care remained the preferred option for young people who cannot live with their birth families as it provided a stable, family-based environment for those children. Foster care can also enable the young people to stay in their local community, attend the same school, access the same GP, see their friends and have contact with their birth family. As at 31 March 2025, 50% of cared for children were in foster placements. After this, officers would look at connected carers and extended family members. There was not a finite number of foster carers required as there had to be the right foster carer with the right skills for the right young person. It was also noted that foster carers can move on or retire, so there would always be some turnover. The more foster carers that were available, the more ability to match foster carers to the needs of the young people, including those with disabilities or those who were slightly older.</p> <p>Members requested data on the number of children needing foster care, placement durations, and churn rates among foster carers. Officers agreed to provide this information.</p> <p>Members commended officers and acknowledged the progress made in fostering.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Committee asked questions of officers as part of its review.</p>
43.	<p>FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 9</i>)</p> <p>Members noted that there appeared to be more reports going to the Cabinet Member rather than to Cabinet, citing the School Organisation Plan, Annual Education Standards report, the Care Strategy for Children and Care Experienced Young People and Determination of Relevant Area for Admissions Arrangements.</p> <p>Officers noted that in general, more service level reports would go to the Cabinet Member rather than to Cabinet.</p> <p>Members suggested that there had been a change and asked for the reasons why. Officers would follow up.</p>

	RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the Forward Plan
44.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 10</i>)</p> <p>Members asked to have an audit of venues used in the past year for the Youth Offer.</p> <p>Members also highlighted the Co-Opted Member vacancies of the Committee. Officers noted that these would look to be filled in line with the upcoming local elections.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Committee considered the report</p>
	The meeting, which commenced at 7:00 pm, closed at 8:55 pm.

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Ryan Dell, Democratic Services Officer on democratic@hillingdon.gov.uk. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, officers, the press and members of the public.

BUDGET & SPENDING REPORT - SELECT COMMITTEE MONITORING

Committee name	Children, Families & Education Select Committee
Corporate Director(s) responsible	Julie Kelly, Corporate Director of Children's Services
Papers with report	Appendix A – Tables 1-4
Ward	All

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Committee note the 2025/26 Month 7 budget monitoring position.

HEADLINES

2. This monitoring report provides an update on the 2025/26 Month 7 budget position relevant to the Select Committee. The Corporate Director, supported by their Head of Finance, will attend the meeting to provide further details and clarifications.
3. **2025/26 MONTH 7 BUDGET MONITORING POSITION**
4. **Children, Families & Education** – As at Month 7, services within this directorate are reporting a pressure of £6.0m, representing no movement from Month 6. The pressure in this area is driven by additional demand for care, with this position being in part impacted by the Temporary Accommodation pressure leading to a lack of general needs properties within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for move-on. Additional pressure is driven by a reduction in the use of flexible capital receipts to fund transformation costs within Education recognised in Month 6.
5. Table 1 provides an overview of this Committee's Month 7 budget monitoring position by portfolio. It includes adjustments made to the forecast for Earmarked Reserves, Provisions and Transformation Capitalisation.
6. Table 2 provides a detailed breakdown of this Committee's Month 7 budget monitoring position by service area. It includes adjustments made for Earmarked Reserves, Provisions and Transformation Capitalisation.
7. **Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)** – As of Month 7, the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is forecasting an in-year deficit of £10.6m with a £1.9m favourable movement from Month 6, representing a further improvement from the £15m outturn for 2024/25. The favourable movement relates to High Needs expenditure and the service's ongoing work to reduce reliance on costly independent placements through increased local provision and early intervention. This in-year shortfall is entirely driven by continued demand and cost pressures in High Needs placements, which remain significantly underfunded in the DSG allocation from the DfE. These pressures are not unique to the local authority; nationally, local authorities are facing similar challenges. Rising demand for specialist provision, a shortage of maintained special school places, and increasing reliance on costly independent non-maintained placements are contributing to widespread overspends in the High Needs Block. Despite efficiency targets and mitigation efforts, the structural underfunding of High Needs provision

continues to place significant strain on DSG budgets across the country. The table below provides a summary of the Schools Budget and the current forecast.

8. Whilst the Safety Valve funding with the Department of Education (DfE) is currently suspended, the Council is actively progressing a range of strategic initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), while ensuring more sustainable use of resources. These efforts include reducing the overall number of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), lowering the average top-up funding required per EHCP, and decreasing the average cost of education placements. In parallel, the Council is working to enhance the value for money of commissioned services and to increase financial contributions from partner agencies towards the support of children and young people with SEND. The Council is beginning to see a significant reduction in the in-year deficit as a consequence.
9. A core target for the revised High Needs Safety Valve Plan is to actively reduce unit costs by concentrating SEN support in-borough within our maintained schools and thereby reduce dependence on high cost independent and out-of-borough placements. Trend data shows clear evidence that the approach which has been in place since early 2024/25 is now beginning to have a positive impact.
10. The mounting DSG deficits remain a significant national issue, with projections indicating a substantial funding gap for English councils. Specifically, English councils face a £2.3 billion funding gap in 2025/26, rising to £3.9 billion by 2026/27, creating a £6.2 billion shortfall over two years, according to the Local Government Association (LGA). This deficit is primarily driven by increased demand for services for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
11. Table 3 provides an overview of the Month 7 position for the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

12. 2025/26 SAVINGS

13. For the services within the remit of this Committee, the savings requirement for 2025/26 is £4.549m, as set out in the Council's budget strategy.
14. As of Month 7, £4.276m (94%) of the savings and interventions are being recorded as banked or on track for delivery, with a further £0.273m (6%) being at initial stages of delivery. There are no savings that are being reported as having potential challenges in delivery.
15. Table 4 provides a detailed breakdown of the 2025/26 Month 7 savings position by portfolio.

PERFORMANCE DATA

16. N/A

RESIDENT BENEFIT

17. Regular monitoring of financial performance is used to assess whether spending and savings targets are being met, thereby supporting the efficient delivery of services to residents. By closely tracking expenditure and identifying variances, the council can take timely corrective actions to address overspending and mitigate risks. This also enhances public transparency and accountability, providing residents with confidence that their Council is managing finances

prudently and prioritising their needs. Overall, regular monitoring supports safeguarding the Council's finances and the delivery of quality services to residents.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

18. This is primarily a finance report and the implications are set out in the main body of the report above.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

19. There are no direct legal implications arising from regular monitoring of the council's finances by select committees.

20. Democratic Services advise that effective overview and scrutiny arrangements require access to the information under the committee's purview and, in accordance with the 2024 Statutory Scrutiny Guidance, such information includes finance and risk information from the Council, and its partners where relevant.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

21. NIL

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Tables 1-4

Appendix A – Tables 1-4

Table 1 – 2025/26 Month 7 Budget Monitoring Position by Portfolio

Service Area		Approved Budget	Underlying Forecast	Earmarked Reserves	Provisions	Transformation Capitalisation	Management Action	Forecast Outturn	Final Forecast Variance	Forecast Variance Prior Month	Change in Variance
R5: Executive Director Children and Young Peoples Services	Expenditure	79,339	89,190	(376)	0	(687)	(3,346)	84,782	5,442	4,714	729
	Income	(22,121)	(25,480)	(130)	0	0	3,987	(21,624)	497	1,222	(725)
	Sub-Total	57,218	63,710	(506)	0	(687)	641	63,158	5,939	5,935	4

Table 2 – 2025/26 Month 7 Budget Monitoring Position by Service Area

Service Area		Approved Budget	Underlying Forecast	Earmarked Reserves	Provisions	Transformation Capitalisation	Management Action	Forecast Outturn	Final Forecast Variance	Forecast Variance Prior Month	Change in Variance
R5C: Director, Children Social Care	A1: Staffing Costs	21,684	20,121	0	0	(111)	542	20,553	(1,132)	(1,340)	208
	A2: Non-Staffing Costs	34,763	39,969	0	0	0	(504)	39,465	4,702	4,107	595
	A3: Grants Fees & Other Income	(15,254)	(15,466)	(130)	0	0	167	(15,429)	(175)	432	(607)
	Sub-Total	41,193	44,624	(130)	0	(111)	205	44,589	3,395	3,200	196
R5E: Director Education and SEND	A1: Staffing Costs	8,015	10,600	0	0	(353)	(486)	9,760	1,745	1,775	(30)
	A2: Non-Staffing Costs	1,688	4,904	(376)	0	0	(2,898)	1,631	(58)	(59)	1
	A3: Grants Fees & Other Income	(5,455)	(8,460)	0	0	0	3,820	(4,641)	815	815	0
	Sub-Total	4,248	7,044	(376)	0	(353)	436	6,750	2,502	2,531	(29)
R5S: Director SPQR	A1: Staffing Costs	8,012	8,302	0	0	(223)	0	8,079	67	135	(68)
	A2: Non-Staffing Costs	5,177	5,294	0	0	0	0	5,294	118	96	22
	A3: Grants Fees & Other Income	(1,412)	(1,554)	0	0	0	0	(1,554)	(143)	(26)	(118)
	Sub-Total	11,777	12,042	0	0	(223)	0	11,819	42	205	(163)
R5: Executive Director Children and Young Peoples Services	A1: Staffing Costs	37,711	39,023	0	0	(687)	56	38,392	680	570	111
	A2: Non-Staffing Costs	41,628	50,167	(376)	0	0	(3,402)	46,390	4,762	4,144	618
	A3: Grants Fees & Other Income	(22,121)	(25,480)	(130)	0	0	3,987	(21,624)	497	1,222	(725)
	Sub-Total	57,218	63,710	(506)	0	(687)	641	63,158	5,939	5,935	4

Table 3: Month 7 DSG Income and Expenditure Summary

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Blocks	Budget 2025/26			Forecast £m	Variance £m	Month 6 £m	Change £m
	DSG Settlement	Academy Recoupment	LBH Maintained				
	£m	£m	£m				
Schools Block	297.9	(187.0)	110.9	110.9	0	0	0
Early Years Block	48.3	0	48.3	48.3	0	0	0
Central Schools Block	2.5	0	2.5	2.5	0	0	0
High Needs Block	86.8	(13.1)	73.7	71.8	(1.9)	0	(1.9)
Budgeted Use of Reserves	(12.5)	0	(12.5)	(12.5)	0	0	0
Total	423.0	(200.1)	222.9	221.0	(1.9)	0	(1.9)
Balance Brought Forward 1 April 2025					65.9		
Budgeted Use of Reserves					12.5		
Pressure/(Reduction)					(1.9)		
Total Deficit at 31 March 2026					76.5		

Table 4 – 2025/26 Month 7 Savings Position by Directorate

Directorate	Description				RAG Rating 2025/26 & B/fwd savings						Total 2025/26 £'000
		B/fwd	2025/26	Total	B	G	A1	A2	R	W/O	
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Children, Families & Education	Improving and Modernising the Fostering Offer	(462)		(462)	(338)	(124)					(462)
Children, Families & Education	Increase MVF by 1%		(267)	(267)	(267)						(267)
Children, Families & Education	New Care Offer - (Operating Model)		(273)	(273)				(273)			(273)
Children, Families & Education	Semi / Shared Accommodation		(2,156)	(2,156)	(1,680)	(476)					(2,156)
Children, Families & Education	Social Care Delivery Model - Social Care Delivery Model		(495)	(495)	(111)	(384)					(495)
Children, Families & Education	Social Care Delivery Model - Repeat Pregnancies		(600)	(600)	(350)	(250)					(600)
Children, Families & Education	Social Care Delivery Model - Special Guardianship Orders		(296)	(296)	(296)						(296)
Grand Total		(462)	(4,087)	(4,549)	(3,042)	(1,234)	0	(273)	0	0	(4,549)

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CABINET BUDGET PROPOSALS 2026/27

Committee name	Children, Families & Education Select Committee
Corporate Directors responsible	Julie Kelly, Corporate Director of Children's Services
Papers with report	N/A
Ward	All

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee:

- Notes the draft revenue budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy proposals for 2026/27 to 2030/31 relating to services within the Committee's remit;**
- Considers and comments on the financial assumptions, savings proposals, growth pressures, service impacts and delivery risks within those proposals; and**
- Agrees specific feedback and recommendations to be submitted to Cabinet for consideration as part of the final budget proposals to be presented to Council in February 2026.**

HEADLINES

- The Council published the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2026/27 to 2030/31 on Tuesday 23rd December as part of the Cabinet agenda for that evening. This report sets out the growth and saving proposals within the remit of this committee from that report and should be read in conjunction with the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2026/27 to 2030/31 cabinet paper.

Overview

- Services within the remit of this committee are proposed to see a net budget change for 2026/27 of £9.3m, rising to £10.0m by 2028/29, driven by savings proposals in 2026/27 of £2.9m and growth proposals of £12.1m. Whilst the revenue budget proposals are set out in the context of a three-year budget strategy, the Council's legal requirement is to set a balanced budget for 2026/27.
- The below table sets out the overview of savings and growth proposals by directorate for the services within the remit of this committee.

Table 1: Budget Proposal Overview

Children, Families & Education	2026/27 Annual Change (£,000's)	2027/28 Annual Change (£,000's)	2028/29 Annual Change (£,000's)	2026/27 Cumulative Change (£,000's)	2027/28 Cumulative Change (£,000's)	2028/29 Cumulative Change (£,000's)
Savings	(2,876)	(1,758)	(27)	(2,876)	(4,634)	(4,661)
Growth	12,133	1,676	1,813	12,133	13,809	15,622
Children, Families and Education Total	9,257	(82)	1,786	9,257	9,175	10,961

Savings Proposals

4. The below table sets out the line-by-line savings proposals for the services within the remit of this committee as set out in the above overview position.

Table 2: Savings Proposals

Children, Families & Education	2026/27 Annual Change (£,000's)	2027/28 Annual Change (£,000's)	2028/29 Annual Change (£,000's)	2026/27 Cumulative Change (£,000's)	2027/28 Cumulative Change (£,000's)	2028/29 Cumulative Change (£,000's)
Review of Semi-Independent & Shared Accommodation	(216)	(216)	-	(216)	(432)	(432)
New Care Offer - Review of Operating Model	(1,417)	(1,616)	-	(1,417)	(3,033)	(3,033)
Family Hubs - new grant	(899)	74	(27)	(899)	(825)	(852)
Children's Social Care Total	(2,532)	(1,758)	(27)	(2,532)	(4,290)	(4,317)
Ceasing SEND Keyworking	(344)	-	-	(344)	(344)	(344)
Education and SEND Total	(344)	-	-	(344)	(344)	(344)
Children, Families and Education Total	(2,876)	(1,758)	(27)	(2,876)	(4,634)	(4,661)

Growth Proposals

5. The below table sets out the line-by-line growth proposals for the services within the remit of this committee as set out in the above overview position.

Table 3: Growth Proposals

Children, Families & Education	2026/27 Annual Change (£,000's)	2027/28 Annual Change (£,000's)	2028/29 Annual Change (£,000's)	2026/27 Cumulative Change (£,000's)	2027/28 Cumulative Change (£,000's)	2028/29 Cumulative Change (£,000's)
Support for Looked After Children	392	412	433	392	804	1,237
Support for Children with Disabilities	40	42	44	40	82	126
Asylum and Public Health Rebasing	2,591	-	-	2,591	2,591	2,591
Placements Growth Bid	3,901	823	841	3,901	4,724	5,565
Section 17 Growth Bid	1,579	209	230	1,579	1,788	2,018
Corporate Director - Children's Services Salary Budget Rebasing	44	-	-	44	44	44
Training residential	21	-	-	21	21	21
Practice Educators growth bid.	32	-	-	32	32	32
Family Hubs - new grant	899	(74)	27	899	825	852
Children's Social Care Total	9,499	1,412	1,575	9,499	10,911	12,486
Growth of EHC team to meet Statutory Duties	1,527	-	-	1,527	1,527	1,527
Rebasing of Music Service grant income budget	437	-	-	437	437	437
Growth of EP team to meet Statutory Duties	172	-	-	172	172	172
Growth to fund SEND Brokerage role to support lower costs	54	-	-	54	54	54
Transformation Capital Budget Rebasing - CYPS	194	-	-	194	194	194
Education and SEND Total	2,384	-	-	2,384	2,384	2,384
Permanence cost (Kinship and Adoption)	250	264	238	250	514	752

SPQR Total	250	264	238	250	514	752
Children, Families and Education Total	12,133	1,676	1,813	12,133	13,809	15,622

Fees & Charges

6. For 2026/27, the Council has proposed to increase all discretionary Fees & Charges by 10% where appropriate and where the Council anticipates this will generate an overall benefit for the Council, taking into account possible elasticity of demand implications. Where fees and charges have been increased outside of this approach, the financial impact has been included as a standalone saving proposal.
7. The saving generated from this approach for the services within this committee are set out in the table below, with the full details of the charges being levied included in Appendix F of the December Cabinet report.

Table 4: Fees & Charges Savings

Directorate	Charge	2026/27 Forecast Income £'000	2026/27 Saving £'000
Children & Young People's Services	Young People's Centres	(68.2)	(0.14)
Total		(68.2)	(0.14)

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SIX MONTH PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

Committee name	Children, Families & Education Select Committee
Officer reporting	Ian Kavanagh, Head of Business Intelligence
Papers with report	Appendix 1 – Six-month performance report 2025-26
Ward	All

HEADLINES

This six-monthly performance report monitors the value the council provides by benchmarking expenditure against key performance indicators. The analysis is based entirely on publicly available data to ensure a fair, transparent, and repeatable comparison with other local authorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

- 1. Notes the six-month performance report for 2025/26, as attached in Appendix 1; and**
- 2. Makes any comments which will be presented to full Council in January alongside the six-month performance report for information.**

Performance management is a critical function in local government, enabling councils to use data-driven insights to improve outcomes for residents. It supports accountability – both internally and externally – by demonstrating how public services respond to local needs and ensure value for money.

The Council's performance framework is aligned with the Hillingdon Council Strategy and incorporates a suite of reports accessible to services, senior management, the Corporate Management Team, and Cabinet – and then reported to select committees. This annual report draws on key performance indicators and monitoring data to assess progress against strategic objectives. Where applicable, it includes the most recent data available, including pre-2024/25 benchmarks.

Notably, the report integrates financial benchmarking from the 2024-25 local authority revenue expenditure and financing outturn report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. Performance management is about using data to drive evidence-based decision making to challenge current ways of working and service delivery models. It is an important tool for local government to take responsibility for its own performance and for the public and national governments to hold local service providers to account, ensuring they respond to local needs and that public money is being spent wisely.

2. Performance management includes a range of processes and methods to identify shared goals and various measurements of progress towards these. Closely aligned to the concept of governance it ensures arrangements are in place so an authority's objectives can be achieved.
3. Within Hillingdon, performance is aligned to the Council Strategy, where a suite of performance reports is available to services, senior management teams, our Corporate Management Team, and the Leader and Cabinet. Monthly reports are presented to CMT and action logs completed.
4. This report uses key performance indicators and benchmarking data to show performance and value on key services for financial Year 2024/25 (or in some cases, the latest data available as well as pre-financial year 2024/25).
5. The 6-month performance report for 2025/26 presents a detailed and transparent benchmarking of how Hillingdon council is performing across its core service areas, with a clear emphasis on putting residents first. The report reflects a council that is actively responding to significant challenges—rising demand, financial pressures, and evolving community needs—while maintaining a strong commitment to service quality, accountability, and resident wellbeing.
6. **Hillingdon had the 4th lowest net expenditure in London per 100,000 residents.** Heathrow Airport's presence within the borough creates unique operational and financial pressures that many other London authorities do not face. Despite years of government underfunding and these unique challenges, Hillingdon continues to be recognised as a well-run council, consistently delivering strong value for money and maintaining one of the lowest net expenditure levels in London.

Children Services

7. Children's Services continues to provide safe, responsive and inclusive support despite high-pressure operating conditions. Hillingdon has the 3rd lowest net expenditure for Children's Social Care, however achieved an 'Outstanding' Ofsted rating in November 2023, the highest grade indicating a high quality, innovative service that consistently exceeds expectations where children achieve excellent outcomes. Only 15% of councils nationally are currently assessed at the highest standard.
8. Placement sufficiency remains a priority. Hillingdon has the lowest percentage of children in foster care (51%), which increases reliance on residential placements. Work is underway to stabilise provision and expand internal fostering capacity.
9. Hillingdon's Youth Justice Service has the 3rd highest net expenditure when compared to our youth justice statistical neighbours, however we are lower than the London average. It is positive to see we have the 4th lowest rate of first-time entrants compared to our statistical neighbours and lower than the London and national averages.
10. Hillingdon had the 4th lowest net expenditure for education and early years when compared to our statistical neighbours. This is reflected in the demand data for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) as we have the 4th lowest rate of children on an Educational Health Care (EHC) plan and the 2nd lowest rate of education health care needs assessments (EHCNA) requests.

PERFORMANCE DATA

Performance data is included throughout the report.

RESIDENT BENEFIT

This report enables residents, communities, and service users to understand how well services are performing, ensuring transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in meeting local needs.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications to the Council associated with the recommendations in this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct legal Implications that arise out of the recommendations set out in this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL.

APPENDICES

Six-Month Performance Report, 2025/26

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Hillingdon Council: Children, Families & Education Select Committee

Six-month performance report
First half 2025/2026 (April to October)

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Approach

The aim of this performance report is to assess the value the council provides by benchmarking our expenditure against key performance indicators across each directorate. The analysis is based entirely on publicly available data to ensure a fair, transparent, and repeatable comparison with other local authorities. As with all published datasets, the figures are only as accurate as the information submitted by each authority.

Because this report relies on published national datasets, it uses the most recent information available. For most measures, this is the 2024/25 financial year, although a small number of datasets cover slightly different periods. These variations are due to the time required for data cleansing and standardisation by both local authorities and the relevant national publishing bodies (e.g. DLUHC, DfE).

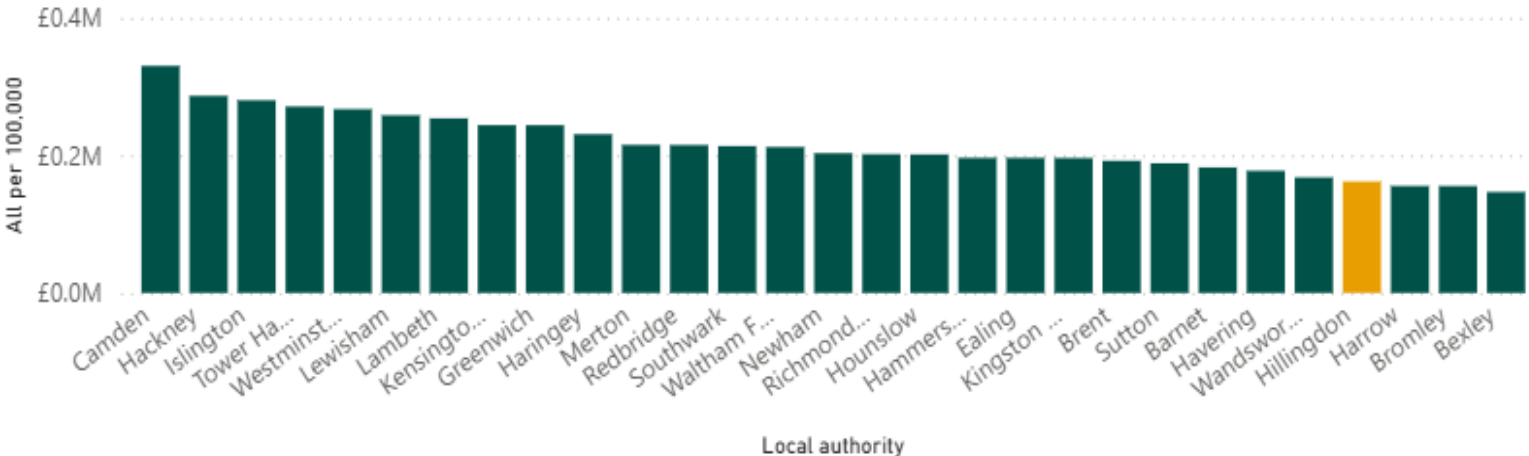
The report incorporates financial benchmarking from the 2024/25 Local Authority Revenue Expenditure and Financing Outturn to demonstrate how effectively Hillingdon deploys its resources to deliver positive outcomes for residents. To allow meaningful comparisons, expenditure figures have been standardised using published population data relevant to each service area—for example, using the 0–18 population when analysing Children’s Services.

Where available, comparisons are made against statistical neighbour groups, recognising that different services have different socio-demographic comparators, such as Youth Justice having a different statistical neighbour set from Adult Social Care . Where statistical neighbour sets are not published, nearest neighbours have been used instead.

Executive Summary

- ❖ Hillingdon had the 4th lowest net expenditure in London per 100,000 residents.
- ❖ Heathrow Airport's presence within the borough creates unique operational and financial pressures that many other London authorities do not face.
- ❖ Despite years of government underfunding and these unique challenges, Hillingdon continues to be recognised as a well-run council, consistently delivering strong value for money and maintaining one of the lowest net expenditure levels in London.

Council net expenditure per 100,000 population



- Adult Social Care had the 2nd lowest expenditure of London boroughs per 100,000 residents.
- Achieved a 'Good' Care Quality Commission (CQC) rating with an overall score of 73%. This score continues to see Hillingdon in the top quartile of inspected authorities.
- Assessed across 5 key areas: safe, effective, caring, responsive and well-led.



- ❖ Resident Services had the 8th lowest expenditure of London boroughs for housing general fund and homelessness expenditure per 100,000 residents.
- ❖ Achieved a C2 (2nd highest) grade from the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH).
- ❖ Grading ranges from C1 to C4. Only 7 of 66 (10.6%) local authorities assessed achieved the C1 grade and most authorities (56%) received a C3 or C4 grade.



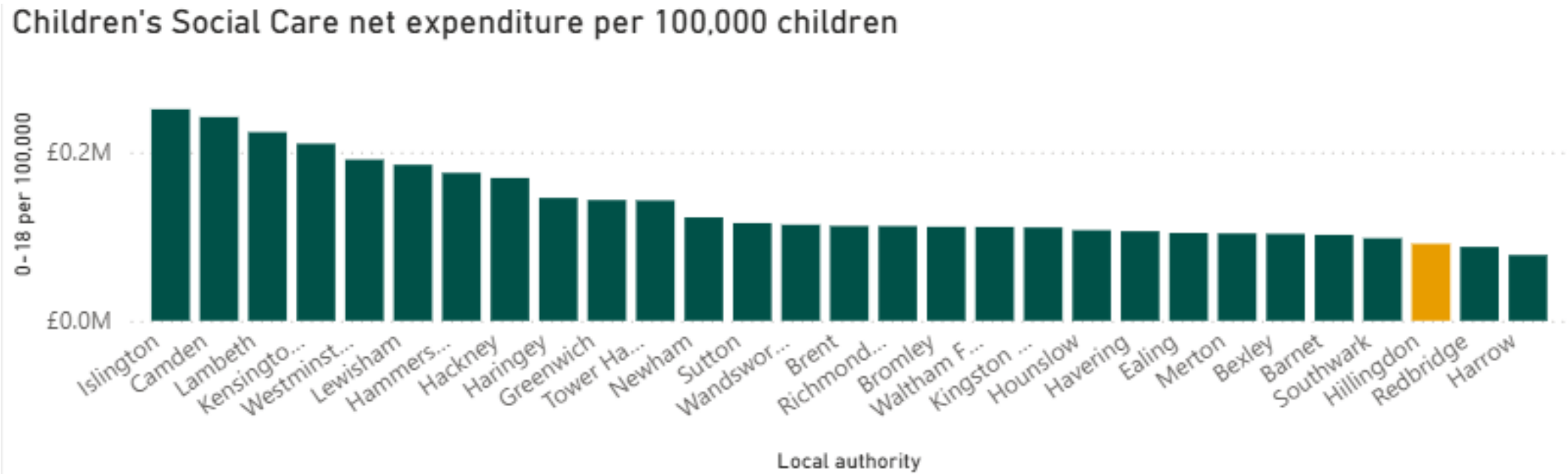
- Children's social care had the 3rd lowest expenditure of London boroughs per 100,000 children.
- Achieved an 'Outstanding' Ofsted rating in November 2023, the highest grade indicating a high quality, innovative service that consistently exceeds expectations where children achieve excellent outcomes.
- Only 15% of Councils Nationally are currently assessed at the highest standard.

Julie Kelly
Corporate Director of Children's Services



Children's Services Summary

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Hillingdon has the 3rd lowest net expenditure across all London councils for children's social care per 100,000 children, but despite this achieved an 'Outstanding' Ofsted rating at the last inspection in November 2023.

Achieving the highest grade indicates a high quality, innovative service that consistently exceeds expectations where children achieve excellent outcomes. Only 15% of Councils nationally are currently assessed at the highest standard.

Children, Families and Education – Children’s Social Care (Demand and Safeguarding)

Comparators	Children Social Care net expenditure	Safeguarding CYP services net expenditure	Referrals	Completed Assessments	Assessment Timeliness	s47 enquiries	Re-registrations for CPP	Open CPP
Reading	152892	29323	791.7	729.5	62%	288.2	30.0%	62.0
Coventry	138394	41266	559.7	596.4	84%	316.5	27.2%	63.5
Southampton	133614	29002	614.2	633.1	88%	262.0	29.3%	54.8
London	127345	33312	556.4	542.7	86%	195.3	21.2%	40.5
England	120316	26482	518.3	536.0	84%	187.1	24.7%	41.6
Waltham Forest	111208	27338	719.8	640.2	98%	225.3	19.4%	36.1
Peterborough	110878	29496	662.7	560.8	83%	173.3	22.6%	49.5
Hounslow	107353	17815	382.1	508.6	96%	149.7	15.8%	37.0
Ealing	104107	23401	529.3	522.2	86%	138.9	21.5%	38.0
Hillingdon	91258	19923	520.4	527.4	92%	167.1	24.5%	34.0
Redbridge	87598	37567	505.0	501.5	93%	176.5	13.9%	32.0
Harrow	77882	26181	413.7	464.3	65%	202.2	18.8%	48.6
Slough			749.4	797.3		275.4	19.7%	43.5

- Understanding the data:
- **Children’s Social Care net expenditure¹** - Shows the 2024-25 expenditure. Value is in £000s, per 100,000 0-18-year-olds.
 - **Safeguarding Children and Young People’s Services (CYP) net expenditure¹** - Shows the 2024-25 expenditure. Value is in £000s, per 100,000 0-18-year-olds.
 - **Referrals²** - Shows the number of children referred to social care in 2023-24 per 100,000 0-17-year-olds.
 - **Completed Assessments²** - Shows the number of children completing a social care assessment in 2023-24 per 100,000 0-17-year-olds.
 - **Assessment Timeliness²** - Shows the percentage of assessments completed in 45 working days in 2023-24.

- **S47 enquiries²** - Shows the number of s47 (Child protection enquiries) in 2023-24 per 100,000 0-17-year-olds.
- **Re-registrations for child protection plans (CPP)²** - Shows the percentage of child protection plans starting in 2023-24 that had a previous CPP in the last 12 months.
- **Open CPP²** - Shows the number of open CPPs per 100,000 10-17-year-olds at the end of the year 2023-24.

Children, Families and Education – Children’s Social Care (Demand and Safeguarding)

Hillingdon had the 3rd lowest net expenditure for children’s social care when compared to our children’s statistical neighbours and are lower than the London and national average. Hillingdon also has the 2nd lowest net expenditure for safeguarding children and young people’s services compared to statistical neighbours. Hillingdon’s low cost is reflected in the demand indicators, as Hillingdon falls in the lowest third for assessments completed, section 47 enquiries and open child protection plans. However, Hillingdon’s referral rate is more in line with the average at 520 referrals per 100,000 0-17-year-olds, which is slightly above the national average of 518 but below the London average of 556.

Hillingdon’s assessment timeliness was the 4th highest among neighbours at 92%, well above the London (86%) and national (84%) averages. The re-registrations for child protection plans was 24.5%, the 4th highest when compared to the statistical neighbours, slightly below the national (24.7%) average and above London (21.2%). Lower numbers result in higher percentage swings, deep dive into re-registrations take place to consider any learning.

Children, Families and Education – Children’s Social Care (Care experienced)

Comparators	Children Social Care net expenditure	CLA net expenditure	CLA UASC net expenditure	LAC in foster placements	Open LAC at year end	UASC at year end	19-21yr old care leavers in touch	19-21yr old care leavers in suitable accommodation	19-21yr old care leavers in EET
Harrow	77882	25705		70%	29	15%	97.00%	91%	66%
Waltham Forest	111208	49687	3768	74%	50	9%	93.00%	89%	59%
London	127345	56520	2318	69%	51	12%	93.00%	89%	58%
Redbridge	87598	35370	4071	71%	40	23%	91.00%	88%	58%
Coventry	138394	64363		73%	84	10%	93.00%	86%	57%
Ealing	104107	48615		65%	37	11%	96.00%	95%	57%
Hounslow	107353	55328		61%	42	18%	91.00%	90%	56%
England	120316	64898	2314	67%	70	9%	92.00%	88%	54%
Hillingdon	91258	47937	6367	51%	43	26%	85.00%	89%	54%
Peterborough	110878	45728		70%	75	10%	88.00%	80%	46%
Slough				60%	45	13%	75.00%	89%	44%
Southampton	133614	72843	2958	71%	97	8%	86.00%	79%	44%
Reading	152892	69046	2952	66%	70	11%	85.00%	81%	43%

Understanding the data:

- Children’s Social Care net expenditure¹** - Shows the 2024-25 expenditure. Value is in £000s, per 100,000 0-18-year-olds.
- Children looked after (CLA) net expenditure¹** – Shows the 2024-25 expenditure on looked after children. Value is in £000s, per 100,000 0-18-year-olds.
- CLA unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) net expenditure¹** - Shows the 2024-25 expenditure on unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Value is in £000s, per 100,000 0-18-year-olds.

- LAC in foster placements²** – Shows the percentage of looked after children in foster placements at the end of 2023-24.
- Open LAC at year end²** - Shows the number of looked after children open at the end of 2023-24 per 100,000 0-17-year-olds.
- UASC at year end²** - Shows the percentage of looked after children who are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children at the end of the year 2023-24.
- 19-21-year-old care leavers in touch²** - Shows the percentage of care leavers the service are in touch with whose 19th to 21st birthday fell in the year 2023-24.
- 19-21-year-old care leavers in suitable accommodation²** - Shows the percentage of care leavers who are in suitable accommodation around their 19th to 21st birthday in the year 2023-24.
- 19-21-year-old care leavers in EET²** - Shows the percentage of care leavers who are in education, employment or training around their 19th to 21st birthday in the year 2023-24.

Children, Families and Education – Children’s Social Care (Care experienced)

Hillingdon had the 3rd lowest net expenditure for children’s social care when compared to our children’s statistical neighbours, and the 4th highest net expenditure on looked after children. Hillingdon is lower than the London and national average for both figures. However, Hillingdon has by far the largest spend on unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) at £6,367,000 per 100,000 0-18-year-olds – 56% more than the next highest statutory neighbour Redbridge (£4,071,000). Hillingdon has the highest percentage of looked after children who are UASC, at 26% compared to Redbridge’s 24% and the London and national averages at 12% and 9%, respectively. While UASC costs are significant this is fully grant funded.

Hillingdon had the 5th lowest rate of looked after children (43) at the end of 2023-24, lower than both the London (51) and national (70) averages. However, Hillingdon had the lowest percentage of children in foster placements at 51%, significantly lower than the London (69%) and national (67%) averages. This may be contributing to higher reliance on residential placements, with associated cost and stability implications.

Increasing the number and percentage of children cared for by foster carers is a key priority for the service area. Hillingdon has increased the number of fostering household by 14 with a further 14 expected by the end of this financial year.

Hillingdon’s performance for 19 to 21-year-olds care leavers is mixed. Hillingdon has a high percentage (89%) of care leavers in suitable accommodation, in line with the London (89%) and national (88%) averages. Hillingdon was in touch with 85% of care leavers. This is the joint 2nd lowest percentage when compared to our statistical neighbours and below London (93%) and national (92%) averages. Hillingdon’s education, employment and training rate for care leavers was 54%, in line with the national (54%) rate but below the London (58%) average.

Children, Families and Education – Youth Justice

YJS Family	Youth Justice Net Expenditure	Use of Custody	First Time Entrants	Reoffending Rate	Reoffending Frequency
London	7636	0.13	200.0	30.4%	3.31
Brent	6419	0.06	210.0	27.5%	2.60
Hounslow	5806	0.10	178.0	34.7%	4.68
Hillingdon	5719	0.09	138.0	37.7%	2.73
Ealing	5043	0.05	151.0	20.7%	2.58
National	4651	0.10	157.0	31.9%	4.30
Merton	4614	0.05	96.0	38.8%	3.84
Sutton	4573	0.04	55.0	20.0%	2.50
Coventry	4450	0.03	151.0	34.6%	5.17
Redbridge	4299	0.18	161.0	42.1%	3.86
Barnet	3635	0.02	177.0	30.5%	3.92
Harrow	3244	0.18	110.0	29.6%	2.50
Reading		0.00	161.0	28.1%	2.63

Understanding the data:

- **Youth Justice net expenditure¹** - Shows the 2024-25 expenditure. Value is in £000s, per 100,000 11-18-year-olds.
- **Use of custody³** - Published figure from Youth Justice Board (YJB) 2024-25. Shows the number of children receiving a custodial sentence in 2024-25 per 1,000 10-17-year-olds.
- **First time entrants³** - Shows the number of children who receive a youth caution or court conviction for the first time in 2024-25 per 100,000 10-17-year-olds.
- **Reoffending rate³** - Shows the percentage of children who reoffend within 12 months of a previous offence. Latest data is for July 22 - June 23 due to cohort being tracked for 12 months.
- **Reoffending frequency rate³** - Shows the average number of reoffences per reoffender within the 12 months of a previous offence. Latest data is for July 22 - June 23 due to cohort being tracked for 12 months.

Hillingdon has the 3rd highest net expenditure when compared to our youth justice statistical neighbours, however Hillingdon is lower than the London average. It is positive to see Hillingdon has the 4th lowest rate of first-time entrants compared to the statistical neighbours and lower than the London and national averages. Hillingdon's rates of custody are higher than most statistical neighbours but below London and national average. Hillingdon has the 3rd highest reoffending rate, but the 3rd lowest reoffending frequency, meaning children who enter the youth justice system are more likely to commit another offence, but are likely to commit fewer further offences.

Often children commit a subsequent offence before being directed to youth justice services, where Hillingdon's youth justice service can then intervene and successfully reduce the rate and number of offences.

Children, Families and Education – SEND and Education

Comparators	Education net expenditure	Early years net expenditure	EHCP Active Caseload	Requests proceeding to assessment	EHCNA requests	Eligible 3&4yr olds for 15 hours funding	NEET 16 & 17yr olds
Ealing	485396	171739	320	70.8%	66	87.73%	1.0%
Redbridge	470980	165861	300	71.2%	62	94.02%	2.3%
Southampton	437298	226060	293	69.3%	60	84.00%	4.9%
London	415485	185910	338	67.1%	74	85.75%	1.9%
Hounslow	399564	172544	347	58.5%	72	85.29%	1.7%
Waltham Forest	396241	155472	415	64.1%	90	84.26%	1.0%
National	344568	198604	358	65.4%	86	93.12%	3.4%
Reading	343931	206035	311	55.5%	82	96.00%	3.4%
Hillingdon	320566	165091	310	50.4%	61	87.32%	2.5%
Harrow	319783	112001	312	78.4%	62	84.06%	1.3%
Coventry	285925	164835	255	55.9%	84	86.00%	3.6%
Peterborough	249226	202001	380	59.3%	90	92.00%	5.4%

Understanding the data:

- **Education net expenditure¹** - Shows the 2024-25 expenditure. Value is in £000s, per 100,000 0-18-year-olds.
- **Early years net expenditure¹** - Shows the 2024-25 expenditure. Value is in £000s, per 100,000 0-4-year-olds.
- **EHCP active caseload⁴** - Shows the rate of open education, health and care plan on census day in January 2025, per 100,000 0-25-year-olds.
- **Requests proceeding to assessment⁴** - Shows the percentage of requests to SEND that proceeded to an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment in the 2024-25 census year.
- **EHCNA requests⁴** - Shows the rate of Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment requests in the 2024-25 census year, per 100,000 0-25-year-olds.
- **Eligible 3 and 4-year-olds for 15 hours funding⁵** - Shows the percentage of 3 and 4-year-olds who are eligible for up to 15 hours of free childcare funding in 2025.
- **NEET 16 and 17-year-olds⁶** - Shows the percentage of 16 and 17-year-olds who are not in education, training or employment in 2025.

Children, Families and Education – SEND and Education

Hillingdon had the 4th lowest net expenditure for education and early years when compared to our statistical neighbours. Hillingdon are lower than the London and national average. This is reflected in the demand data for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) as Hillingdon has the 4th lowest rate of children on an Educational Health Care (EHC) plan and the 2nd lowest rate of education health care needs assessments (EHCNA) requests compared to the statistical neighbours. Additionally, Hillingdon has the lowest percentage of requests proceeding to assessment. However, this may suggest a tendency to reject valid requests and should be considered alongside data on appeals and complaints.

Hillingdon's not in education or training (NEET) figure for 16 and 17-year-olds is 2.5%, which is the 6th highest compared to our statistical neighbours but below the national average of 3.4%. There has been a robust focus on NEET which has driven down the number of children whose destinations are 'not known' which subsequently raised the percentage of NEET. This however enables targeted intervention.

Early years higher costs were attributable to the subsidised nursery provision that is no longer part of our delivery model.

The service is aware that Key Stage 5 opportunities and outcomes need improving and have prioritised this area, recent output being a digital Post 16 Prospectus.

Data Sources:

1. LA revenue expenditure and financing: 2024- 2025
2. ChAT tool published data for 2023-24
3. YDS Published Data
4. SEN2 2025
5. DfE, Education provision for children u5
6. DfE

FAMILY FIRST PARTNERSHIP (FFP) REFORMS

Committee name	Children, Families & Education Select Committee
Officer reporting	Helen Smith, Head of Service, Social Care Delivery Transformation Donna Hugh, Assistant Director, Care Provision
Papers with report	Care Strategy
Ward	All

HEADLINES

Hillingdon Children's Services is undertaking a major transformation in response to the Family First Partnership (FFP) reforms and the statutory duties introduced by the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill 2024. These changes mark a significant shift in how support is delivered to children and families, creating services that are integrated, responsive, and shaped by co-production and trauma-informed practice. This report sets out the progress achieved to date, the governance arrangements in place, and the actions being taken to meet national priorities.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee note the key developments and findings outlined in this report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

London Borough of Hillingdon Children's Services is undergoing a significant transformation across statutory social care services in response to the Family First Partnership (FFP) reforms introduced by the Department for Education (DfE). This work is aligned with the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill and national priorities for integrated Family Help, multi-agency child protection, and Family Group Decision Making (FGDM).

Our approach is collaborative, working closely with strategic partners in Health, Education, Police, and Voluntary Sectors. The service is drawing on best practice from the Families First for Children Pathfinder programme and the guidance published by the DfE "How-To Guide" to ensure effective implementation.

Governance

Since the announcement of the FFP reforms in March 2025, Hillingdon has acted decisively to embed the required changes. At the heart of this transformation is the Executive Transformation Group, which brings together senior leaders from health, education, police, and social care. Meeting monthly, this group provides oversight, monitors progress, and ensures accountability across all strands of the programme.

A detailed Delivery Plan for 2025–26 has been submitted to the Department for Education, setting out the phased implementation approach, anticipated expenditure, and workforce development strategy. Officers have maintained regular engagement with DfE colleagues, including a recent session in December 2025, and continue to draw on sector-wide expertise through the London Innovation and Improvement Alliance (LiiA) and the nine Pathfinder authorities. Financial

oversight remains robust, with budget proposals and grant allocations tracked through the Medium-Term Financial Strategy to ensure compliance and sustainability.

Consultation and Engagement

Between April – June 2025, extensive consultation took place with staff and partners, this included roadshows, workshops, and reflective sessions to engage frontline practitioners, health colleagues, police, and education leaders in shaping the reforms. Officers have worked closely with unions and staff groups to ensure transparency, support, and shared ownership of the changes. Our approach has been informed by national best practice, including co-design principles and family voice integration, as recommended in the DfE's *How-To Guide*.

During this process, several delivery groups have been formed, each responsible for specific areas of the transformation. These groups include representatives from multiple agencies as well as adults and children who have lived experience. DfE grant funding has been used to increase capacity for engagement and participation with children, families and parents through the recruitment of two additional part time Participation Officers with lived experience to lead on the co-production. In addition, officers have created a data analyst apprenticeship role. This role will strengthen capacity to meet the increase data requirements of the FFP. Recruitment for this role will be ring fenced to individuals with care experience, reflecting the commitment to developing talent and supporting our responsibilities as a corporate parent.

Family Help

A major milestone was reached on 27 August 2025 with the launch of our new locality-based Family Help Service. The service integrated Early Help key workers with First Response and Children's Social Work Teams, creating a single locality-based Family Help service. The localities are aligned our Family Hubs/ children centres enabling services to be provided in a geographical area, responsive to community needs.

In line with FFP requirements officers have increased our workforce of alternatively qualified key workers, enabling families to benefit from skilled early help support staff. Recruitment has brought diverse expertise from health, education, therapeutic services, and criminal justice into the service, to complement our social work teams. Additional service managers provide leadership, quality assurance, and progression opportunities across the new service. A skills audit informs a structured training plan, complementing safeguarding and social care development programs. Trauma-informed practice remains central to the support provided to children and families in the borough.

A new parent consultation group is being developed to support co-production of a revised assessment framework and other parent-directed communications, authored by parents themselves. The upcoming single Family Help assessment and plan will replace Early Help and Social Care assessments and processes.

Our ambition is to create a service where children and families know, trust, and feel supported by their key worker or social worker. Families will experience continuity of care, with practitioners who understand their history and context, reducing the need for repeated storytelling and building strong, respectful relationships. There is an associated training programme developed to meet the needs of the service leaning on the established training available from the West London Alliance and Safeguarding Partnership.

New Beginnings

Alongside Family Help, the New Beginnings service launched in November 2025, offering trauma-informed support to expectant mothers to reduce repeat care proceedings. At the time of writing it is supporting eight families, only seven days after its launch and its group work delivery programme commenced in December 2025.

The team is working closely with the Topaz, specialist midwifery team and health visitors to ensure clear and consistent communication. These links are invaluable, allowing the team to share information quickly and effectively and vice versa. The existing trusted relationships with social workers is a real strength, helping to deliver a high level of support to families.

Multi-Agency Child Protection Team and the Stronger Families Hub.

Officers are currently transitioning into the development of the Multi-Agency Child Protection Team (MACPT) and a revised and invigorated Stronger Families Hub, moving away from the traditional MASH and bringing an innovative non-stigmatising and creative one stop hub, with further integration of services across the safeguarding partnership. The service has been co-located at the Civic Centre since 01 December with representation from Probation, Housing, Health, Education, Police, Youth Offer and Domestic Abuse Services. This builds on the previous MASH relationships. There is ongoing work to develop Standard Operating Procedures and develop a strong culture of multi-agency decision making.

As part of this development officers have recruited eight Lead Child Protection Practitioner (LCPP) roles, this is an important part of the reforms and one of the most significant changes since the Children's Act 2004. The LCPP is the expert practitioner for child protection and will work with police, health and education partners to identify and respond to children at risk or experiencing significant harm. The role is central to the MACPT. All Child Protection enquiries will be co-allocated to a Family Help Social Worker to undertake the assessment with the LCPP chairing the conference and ensuring expert oversight of child protection processes. The LCPP posts provide progression opportunities for senior social workers across the service who evidence the skill and knowledge to step up into this role. The transition to full implementation will continue through to March 2026, supported by interim resilience measures.

Partner agencies will continue to refer into Children's Services via the established Stronger Families Portal and will be reviewed by the Stronger Families Hub and actioned accordingly, including advice, signposting, or onward referrals.

Family Group Decision Making

Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) continues to be a cornerstone of our approach to empowering families and promoting collaborative solutions. FGDM is a voluntary, structured process that brings together a child's wider family network to develop a family-led plan addressing concerns about safety and wellbeing. This approach prioritises the voice of the family, enabling them to identify practical support and resources while working alongside skilled professionals to safeguard the child.

In Hillingdon, FGDM is delivered through the well-established Family Group Conference (FGC) model, which has been embedded across our services for several years. The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill 2024 now makes FGDM mandatory at the pre-proceedings stage, reinforcing its importance in reducing the need for care proceedings and supporting early intervention.

To strengthen this offer, officers are working on:

- **Expanding access and capacity:** Ensuring FGDM is available at key decision points, including early help, child protection planning, and pre-proceedings.
- **Embedding FGDM within Family Help Plans:** Aligning the process with our new integrated Family Help model so that family-led solutions are central to intervention planning.
- **Training and workforce development:** Delivering targeted training for social workers and key practitioners to improve confidence in facilitating FGDM and integrating outcomes into statutory plans.
- **Enhancing co-production:** Working with families and participation officers with lived experience to refine the model and ensure it reflects the needs and preferences of those using the service.
- **Monitoring impact:** Developing robust data collection and evaluation mechanisms to measure outcomes, including reductions in care proceedings and improvements in family resilience.

Our ambition is to make FGDM a routine part of practice, not just a statutory requirement, so that families feel empowered, respected, and supported in shaping decisions about their children's lives.

Strengthen the Role of Education in Safeguarding

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill 2024 places new duties on safeguarding partners to ensure Education and childcare settings are fully involved in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. Recognising the vital role schools play in early identification and intervention, Hillingdon has strengthened representation from education leaders within the Safeguarding Partnership.

School leaders now contribute at both strategic and operational levels, helping shape policy and practice. This includes participation in partnership boards and safeguarding forums, ensuring that education perspectives are embedded in decision-making. Improved communication channels and regular briefings support consistent engagement, while collaborative working enables schools to play an active role in safeguarding planning and response.

Other Requirements of the Schools and Wellbeing bill

The schools and wellbeing bill includes a number of other mandated requirements in addition to those above. This includes the offer of Staying close support, publication of a Local offer for care leavers and commitment that care leavers will not to be regarded as becoming homeless intentionally.

In November 2025 Hillingdon Children's Services published its Care Strategy which outlines our commitment to delivering high quality care, support, and opportunities for individuals with lived experience of care. This strategy outlined our staying close offer, housing support and local offer for care leavers and is attached as an appendix below

Kinship Local Offer

The National Kinship Care Strategy places kinship care at the centre of children's services reform. Under the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill (Dec 2024), all local authorities must publish a

Kinship Local Offer detailing support for kinship carers and children, based on need rather than legal status. This offer should cover financial assistance, housing advice, education and childcare guidance, clear information and signposting, and access to legal support.

Hillingdon is developing a comprehensive Kinship Local Offer to strengthen support for Special Guardians and wider kinship families. A multi-agency Kinship Steering Group, including Housing, DWP, Health, Education, Legal Services and Children's Services, is overseeing development and implementation. Engagement with regional and national forums is informing best practice, and the full offer is scheduled for publication by March 2026. Hillingdon has applied to join the Department for Education Kinship Pilot to enhance early identification and support pathways. A review of the financial policy is also underway to align allowances with fostering rates.

Currently, Hillingdon provides family support, advocacy, regular support groups, annual welfare checks for over 200 carers, newsletters, therapeutic post-order support from a Senior Social Worker, and CFAB international kinship assessments. Co-production remains central, with input from kinship families, partner agencies, voluntary organisations, and universal services.

Key priorities:

- Publish the Kinship Local Offer by March 2026.
- Strengthen financial support and align with fostering allowances.

PERFORMANCE DATA

Officers are collaborating with colleagues in Digital and Intelligence to enhance performance data capabilities and strengthen management oversight. This includes the development of Power BI dashboards that deliver real-time, consolidated insights for managers, replacing previously fragmented reporting processes. Additionally, officers are engaging with other local authorities to incorporate best practices and ensure the dashboards are intuitive, user-friendly, and accessible.

The programme will include new reporting requirements. Programme reporting will comprise quarterly quantitative and qualitative data returns, alongside initial local planning information. Monitoring will be time-bound for the transformation period (expected to run until the end of 2027–28) and will supplement existing national datasets and cross-government performance insights across local authority, health, and police services.

In addition, delivery of the programme will require updates to the case management system, resulting in the development of new reports and amendments to existing reports to ensure continued statutory compliance and alignment with programme monitoring requirements. These requirements are expected to have implications for existing statutory returns, specifically the Children in Need (CIN) census.

RESIDENT BENEFIT

This report allows Elected Members to have an overview of the Council's approach to the implementation of the Family Fostering reforms and Schools and wellbeing bill.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill: policy summary notes](#)
[Families First Partnership programme - GOV.UK](#)

APPENDICES

Care Strategy

Hillingdon's Care Strategy November 2025-2030





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Foreword

As leaders in Hillingdon's Children's Services, we are proud to present this strategy for our cared for children and care experienced young people. Between us, we bring nearly three decades of service to Hillingdon Council, Poppy with 21 years and Tehseen with eight years. Throughout this time, we have witnessed the incredible resilience, strength, and potential of our children and young people. It is their stories, their triumphs, and their voices that have shaped this strategy and continue to inspire our work every day.

We are proud of how far we've come in Hillingdon. During recent years, we have made significant changes to how we listen, care and support. We've strengthened relationships, improved outcomes, and placed young people at the heart of everything we do. The difference is real and it's visible in the confidence, ambition, and achievements of our young people.

We feel humbled by the journeys we've seen. Young people who may not have had the best start in life have gone on to achieve bigger and better things with the right support, encouragement, and belief. Their success is a testament to what's possible when care is delivered with compassion, consistency, and ambition.

We have high aspirations for our service and for every child and young person we care for. This strategy is not just a document, it's a promise. A promise to keep improving, listening and striving for the very best. We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to all the individuals, organisations, and young people who have contributed their expertise, insight, and experiences to the development of this strategy. Their contributions have been invaluable, and we are honoured to have their voices at the heart of our work.

Together, we embark on this journey of transformation, empowerment, and growth, as we strive to make a positive and lasting difference in the lives of care experienced young people in the London Borough of Hillingdon.

**Tehseen Kauser,
Director of Children's
Social Care**



**Poppy Reddy,
Assistant Director –
Children's Care, Support
and Transitions**



A message from the Director of Children's Services, Julie Kelly

At Hillingdon Council, we take immense pride in our role as corporate parents to the children and young people in our care, as well as those who have left our care. We recognise that our responsibility is to provide each child with the same level of care, respect, and support that we would want for our own children. Our commitment is to champion their successes, celebrate their achievements, and ensure they have the robust support needed to thrive in every aspect of their lives.

This strategy reaffirms our unwavering dedication to safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of all our cared for children and care experienced young people. Our ambition is to make Hillingdon a borough where every child can flourish, regardless of their background or circumstances. This document sets out the key services and support we provide as our young people navigate their journey through care and into adulthood.

We are determined to ensure that our young people are not only recipients of services but are actively involved in shaping them. Their voices, experiences, and aspirations are central to our approach, and we are committed to co-producing services that truly meet their needs.

As Director of Children's Services, I want every child in our care to feel safe, loved, and supported to thrive. Our children deserve the same hopes, dreams, and opportunities as any other child, and it is our collective responsibility across the council and our partners to ensure they are surrounded by care, stability, and ambition. This strategy is rooted in a deep commitment to listening to our children, valuing their voices, and acting with compassion and determination to meet their needs. Together, we will work tirelessly to ensure every child we care for is not only well looked after, but truly seen, heard, and championed.

Our commitment to our children and young people is unwavering. We will continue to do everything in our power to provide them with the care, support, and opportunities they deserve, so that when they look back on their time in care, they remember it as a positive and fulfilling experience, one that has given them the confidence and foundation to succeed in adult life.

**Julie Kelly,
Corporate Director,
Children's Services**



A message from our Cabinet Member

As the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education, I am proud to champion the needs and aspirations of our cared for children and care experienced young people in Hillingdon. This strategy is not just a plan, it is our promise to do what any good parent would do: provide love, stability, and opportunities for every child to thrive.

Our ambition is clear, to make Hillingdon a place where every child feels safe, valued, and supported to reach their full potential. We will achieve this by listening to our young people's voices and ensuring their experiences shape the services we deliver. Their insight is central to this strategy, and we are committed to co-producing solutions that truly reflect what matters most to them.

This strategy also reflects our determination to tackle barriers and stigma, strengthen relationships, and create a culture of aspiration and

belonging. It sets out how we will work together across education, health, housing, and the wider community to deliver consistent, high quality support. We recognise that being in care or leaving care can be challenging, and we will do everything possible to ensure that no young person feels alone or without hope for the future.

I want to thank our dedicated staff, carers, partners, and most importantly, our young people. Your resilience and courage inspire us every day. Together, we will keep striving for excellence and make Hillingdon a borough where every child and young person can look forward to a bright, fulfilling future.

**Councillor Susan O'Brien,
Cabinet Member for
Children, Families and
Education**



A message to our young people from one of our young people

Being in care isn't easy, but there is always someone to help and look after us. Hillingdon ensures that meetings are helpful and you know what's going on. Support from the Virtual School will be really useful for your education and there are lots of opportunities to get involved and meet other people to be part of the Hillingdon family. While turning 18 can be difficult, someone will

be there to guide you through, to prepare you for the future. Hillingdon has written this document as it's important for them to tell us all the important things they do for us to help us on our journeys through care.

**CH,
Our care experienced young person**

Our strategy for cared for children and care experienced young people

Welcome to Hillingdon Council's strategy for our cared for children and care experienced young people. This document outlines our commitment to delivering high quality care, support, and opportunities for individuals with lived experience of care. We recognise the distinct challenges faced by cared for children and care experienced young people and uphold the principle that all young people are entitled to realise their potential, irrespective of their previous circumstances.

Following consultation with our young people, and for the purpose of this strategy, we have moved away from acronyms such as LAC (looked after children) or CIC (children in care). Instead, we now refer to those we care for as 'cared for children' and 'care experienced young people', terms that were chosen by our young people and they felt, they better reflect their experiences and strengths.

At Hillingdon, we understand that council care is a significant factor in a young person's journey. We acknowledge the importance of providing an environment that promotes stability, empowerment, and belonging. Through this strategy, our aim is to support every young person in our care to achieve their potential, be the best version of themselves, and pursue their aspirations.

This strategy has been developed following comprehensive consultation with our care experienced young people, their carers, social workers, and other key professionals involved in their lives. Their input, experiences, and ambitions have played a central role in guiding our approach. By engaging young people throughout the decision-making process, we aim to ensure that this strategy addresses their needs and reflects their hopes for the future.

This strategy outlines how the council will fulfil its responsibilities as set out in national guidance, ensuring all cared for children and care experienced young people are valued, respected, and supported.



Our core principles



Supportive relationships

Relationship-based practice is at the core of our approach and we promote strong, consistent, and trusted relationships between young people and their carers, social workers, and support networks. Positive relationships are the foundation for personal growth and development.

Holistic support

We recognise and celebrate the individuality of each of our children, and we are committed to understanding their individual strengths and needs. To support them on their journey, we will provide comprehensive support that

addresses the diverse and individual needs of our cared for and care experienced young people. This includes all areas, from basic skills to mental health services, educational support, housing assistance, and access to meaningful employment and training opportunities.

Advocacy and participation

We champion the rights of our care experienced young people, empowering them to participate actively in decisions that affect their lives. We are dedicated to amplifying their voices and ensuring they help shape policies and services that impact their wellbeing. In addition, they will always have the support of an

Independent Reviewing Officer who will hold all professionals to account, and they will always have access to independent advocacy if they need it.

We are committed to meaningful co-production and working in partnership with our children. We will listen to their views and design our services and provision taking into account their recommendations and views. Through the Corporate Parenting Panel and participation groups, we will report back to our children through a 'you said, we did' approach.

Continuity and stability

We recognise the importance of stability and consistency in the lives of our care experienced young people. We strive to provide safe places to live and minimise disruptions, ensuring that young people have the stability they need to thrive and develop a strong sense of identity. When a move is necessary, we strive to do this in partnership with our young people and to make sure they understand the reasons for the move and, as far as possible, to make them part of the planning.

Aspirations and achievements

We are committed to helping our care experienced young people realise their full potential by supporting their educational and career aspirations. We provide tailored support, guidance, and opportunities to help them achieve their goals and overcome any barriers they may face. Our participation groups and the 'Walking in Our Shoes' training has told us over the years that the guiding principle of our aspirations for our children should be "would this be good enough for my child?" and we are committed to continue to be guided by this in our practice.

Our commitment to improvement

This strategy aims to create a caring, inclusive, and supportive environment for care experienced young people in the London Borough of Hillingdon. We know the needs of our children change and the challenges we face evolve. To continue to deliver the best for our children, we remain dedicated to ongoing collaboration, evaluation, and adaptation to ensure that our services continually evolve to meet the changing needs of our children and care experienced young people.



What is a corporate parent?

Corporate parenting describes the collective responsibility of the council, including elected members, employees, and partner agencies, to provide the highest standard of care and protection for children and young people who are 'looked after' (cared for). This encompasses those for whom the authority has or shares parental responsibility or provides care and accommodation on behalf of their parent. All care experienced children and young people depend on the entire council and its partners to ensure their care, safety, education, and health needs are met in full. For care experienced young adults, this duty extends to providing support and guidance towards independence, up to the age of 25.

Our approach is rooted in being loving, caring, and ambitious for all children we care for and those with care experience. To achieve this, we work collaboratively with young people and their parents (where safe to do so) and also with partners in health, education, housing, and beyond to guarantee that the services on offer are appropriate, responsive, and focused on improving outcomes for every young person.




Central to our Care Strategy is a steadfast commitment to safeguarding children and young people, protecting them from harm, and providing the support needed for them to flourish and reach their full potential. Our children told us the term 'corporate parenting' does not resonate with them, and so we have updated our language to make it more accessible and empowering.

This strategy has been developed to ensure the corporate parenting principles outlined in the Children and Social Work Act 2017 are embedded in our practice. It focuses on achieving the best outcomes, and outlines what we expect of ourselves as corporate parents and what children and young people in our care and those with care experience can expect from us.

Corporate parenting principles

- To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people.
- To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
- To consider the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people.
- To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners.
- To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people.
- For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work.
- To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

Our values are that all children should grow up and achieve within their own families and networks when it is in their best interests and is safe enough for them to do so. This underpins our mission to ensure that all children and young people have access to the right services at the right time.

For further details, visit  www.gov.uk/government/publications/applying-corporate-parenting-principles-to-looked-after-children-and-care-leavers.

What it means to be in care (cared for children) - The Law

In Hillingdon, a child or young person is a **cared for child** when they are provided with accommodation or are subject to a care order under the Children Act 1989. There are three main routes into care:

- **Care orders:** Made by the courts under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989, where the local authority is granted parental responsibility.
- **Voluntary accommodation:** Under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989, where parents or those with parental responsibility agree for the child to be accommodated by the local authority (or when a child is lost, abandoned or the person who has been caring for the child is being prevented from providing suitable accommodation or care).
- **Youth justice system:** Since 2013, all young people remanded into custody are supported as cared for children.

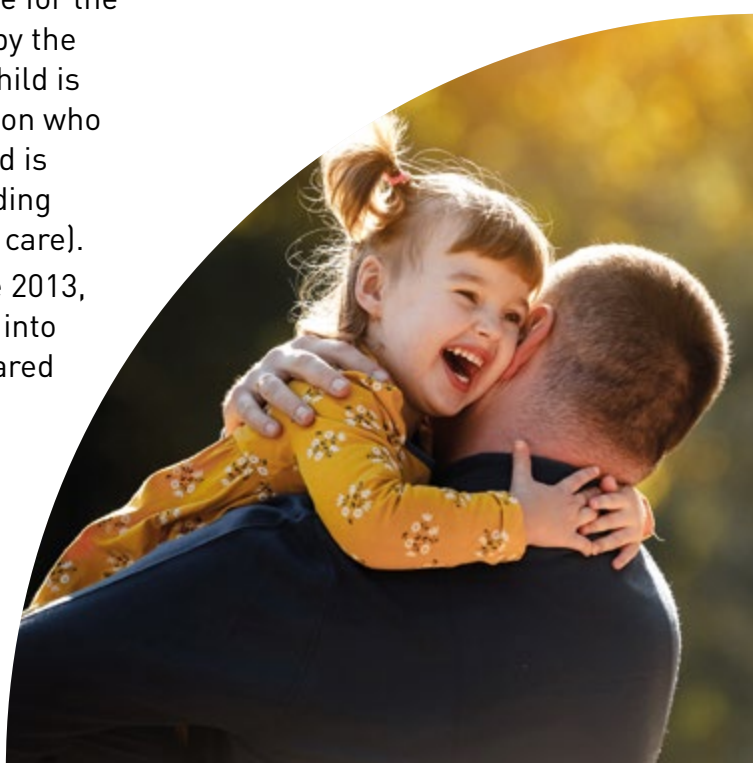
The term 'children looked after' has a specific legal meaning based on the Children Act 1989. A child is looked after by a local authority if they have been provided with accommodation for a continuous period of more than 24 hours, in the

circumstances set out in sections 20 and 21 of the Children Act 1989 or is placed in the care of a local authority by an order made under part IV of the Act.

What it means to be a care experienced young person – The Law

A **care experienced** young person is someone who has been cared for by a local authority for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and was in care on or after their sixteenth birthday. In Hillingdon, care experienced young people are supported in line with national legislation and local policy. Their status is defined as follows:

- **Eligible child:** Aged 16 or 17, still in care, and has been cared for for at least 13 weeks since turning 14.
- **Relevant child:** Aged 16 or 17, no longer in care, but was previously an eligible child.
- **Former relevant child:** Aged 18 to 25 (or beyond if in education or training) and was previously an eligible or relevant child.





- **Qualifying young person:** Aged 16 to 21 (or 25 if in education/training), who was cared for or accommodated but for less than 13 weeks or was subject to a Special Guardianship Order after the age of 16.

All eligible and former relevant care leavers in Hillingdon are entitled to:

- a **Pathway Plan** tailored to their needs and aspirations
- a named **personal adviser (PA)** to provide ongoing support
- **financial assistance** to help with living, education, and training costs.

The Children Act 1989 and 2004 requires local authorities to provide all eligible care leavers with a Pathway Plan and both a PA and ongoing financial assistance. In May 2013, the government published further guidance for local authorities with regards to arrangements for facilitating care leavers to 'stay put' in their foster placements after they reach the age of 18 years.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 extended the right for former relevant

young people to request continued support from a PA up to their 25th birthday. This entitlement is reflected in Hillingdon's Local Offer for care experienced young people.

What it means to be an unaccompanied child seeking asylum

Hillingdon is a Port of Entry (PoE) local authority, which means we are often the first point of contact for children and young people arriving in the UK without a parent or carer. As a result, we see a high number of unaccompanied children seeking asylum entering our care.

These children and young people have often experienced significant trauma, hardship, and displacement due to conflict, persecution, or exploitation in their countries of origin. Their journeys to the UK vary, some may have travelled with the help of agents via air or road, while others may have been smuggled, trafficked, or hidden in vehicles, boats, or shipping containers.



Hillingdon Council works closely with the Home Office and Department for Education to support the NTS and ensure that unaccompanied children are placed in safe, appropriate settings.

To meet the needs of newly arrived children, we have developed a Reception and Safe Care model, which includes access to residential children's homes, supported accommodation, and reception centres. These services are registered with Ofsted and provide a safe and supportive environment while longer-term placements are arranged.

Upon arrival, they are considered extremely vulnerable, as they typically have no identified parent or family member to provide care or protection. This makes them particularly at risk of exploitation, trafficking, offending, and ill health.

Hillingdon Council has a statutory duty to safeguard and support these children. They are treated as cared for children under the Children Act 1989 and are supported in line with our corporate parenting responsibilities. Where a young person's age is uncertain, the local authority may carry out an age assessment to determine the appropriate level of care and support.

National Transfer Scheme (NTS)

To ensure a fair and balanced approach across the country, the government introduced the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) in 2016. Initially voluntary, the scheme became mandatory in 2021. Under the current arrangements:

- local authorities with a proportion of unaccompanied children seeking asylum above the set threshold percentage of their total cared for children population can refer children for transfer.
- local authorities below the set threshold percentage are legally required to accept transfers.

Vulnerabilities of children and young people in care

Exploitation

In Hillingdon, we recognise that cared for children and care experienced young people may be more vulnerable to exploitation due to their lived experiences. Our Children's Social Care teams, including the transition to adulthood service, work in close partnership with safeguarding colleagues and the Safeguarding Partnership Board across children's and adult's services to protect children and young people from all forms of exploitation and abuse. This includes criminal, sexual, financial, online and any other form of exploitation.

Children who go missing

Children and young people who go missing from care are at heightened risk of harm, including exploitation, substance misuse, and violent crime. Hillingdon follows its Missing Children Protocol, ensuring that every child or young person is offered a return home conversation within 72 hours of their return. For care experienced young people, PAs monitor and support young people who go missing, ensuring their needs are addressed. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who go missing are robustly tracked by the 18+ team, with regular liaison with the police and the Home Office to locate and safeguard those who are long-term missing.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE)

Hillingdon's multi-agency safeguarding partnership prioritises the identification and protection of children and young people at risk of CSE. We have embedded training, tools, and data analysis to support practitioners in recognising and responding to CSE. Foster carers and residential colleagues



receive targeted training and support to recognise, address and prevent CSE. Our Practice Framework includes multi-agency workshops to strengthen our collective response to exploitation.

Contextual safeguarding

We are committed to understanding and responding to extra-familial harm, including serious youth violence and exploitation in the community. Through the Children Safeguarding Partnership contextual safeguarding strategy and our contextual safeguarding approach, we work with partners, such as the Police, Youth Justice, Community Safety, and the Violence Reduction Unit to identify and respond to risks in specific locations and peer groups. Multi-agency panels assess and manage complex situations, including those that cross borough boundaries.

We take an active part in Multi-Agency Risk Outside the Home (MAROTH) groups and governance structure that brings together partners from children's services, police, health, education, and community safety. Its purpose is to coordinate responses to harm outside

the home, ensuring that high-risk and complex cases involving adolescents are managed effectively.

Innovative engagement projects, such as pop-up football events and community guardianship initiatives, help create safe spaces for young people.

Reachable moments

In partnership with health services, we are exploring opportunities to engage young people at critical points, such as presentations at A&E, where they may be more open to support following incidents of violence or exploitation. These 'reachable moments' are key to early intervention and safeguarding.

Preventing radicalisation

As corporate parents, we are committed to safeguarding children and young people from radicalisation and extremism. All staff and foster carers complete mandatory Prevent training. We work with key partners including the police, health, and the Home Office to deliver the Prevent strategy, which focuses on:

- challenging extremist ideologies
- supporting vulnerable individuals
- strengthening institutional resilience to radicalisation.

Modern slavery

Cared for children and young people, particularly unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, may be at risk of trafficking and modern slavery. Hillingdon Council adheres to the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and ensures that all staff are trained to identify and respond to concerns. Any child transported for exploitative

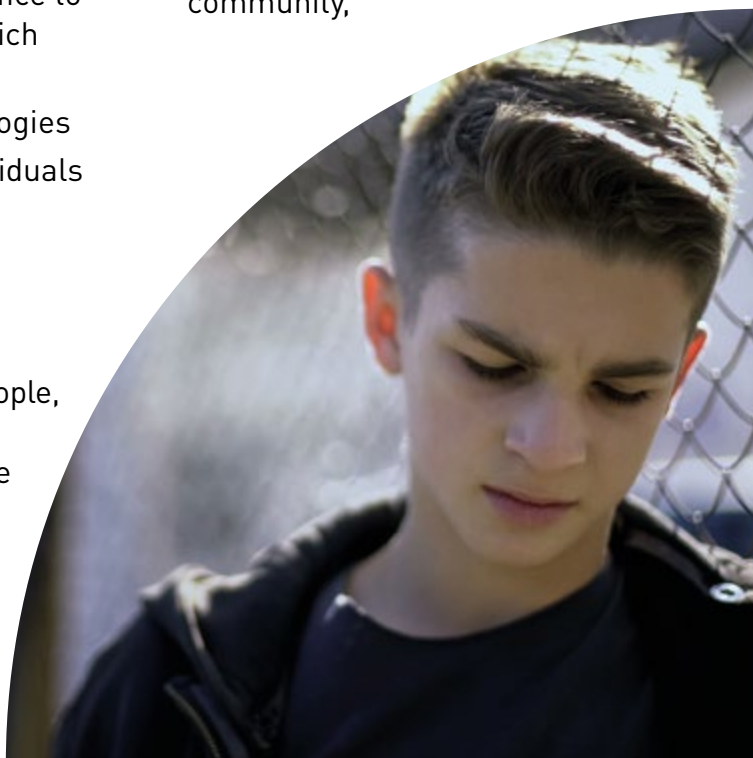
purposes is considered a victim of trafficking. Our procedures ensure swift safeguarding responses and access to support.

Youth justice

We recognise the vulnerability of our cared for children and care experienced young people in relation to offending. We work closely with the police and Youth Justice Service to prevent unnecessary criminalisation. We promote restorative and diversionary approaches and expect carers to manage behaviour without involving the police unless necessary. When a young person does offend, we ensure a coordinated support plan is in place, including transition planning for those leaving custody, to promote rehabilitation and reduce reoffending.

Caring for children who need help

Sometimes, children and young people go through difficult times at home. We have different ways to help, like giving support to families, helping in the community,



or finding a new safe place for a child to live if needed. We only take children into care when it's important for their safety and wellbeing.

Keeping children safe

If a child or young person is not safe at home, we may have to use our legal powers to move them away from their home to keep them safe. When this happens, we act quickly and carefully to make sure they are cared for properly. We make sure the process is handled in a child-centred manner and without unnecessary delays. We plan carefully with the ambition that every young person can have a stable and long-term place to live where they are happy and belong.

We promise to try to find someone in their family or someone they know well to care for them, so they can stay close to the people they love. We believe that staying connected to familiar people, community and friends is important for a young person's wellbeing, identity and their future.

Support after leaving care

When young people leave care, we are here to support them in building a positive future. We want every care experienced young person to feel confident, supported, and ready to take on adult life. That is why we continue offering help and guidance until they are 25.



We will make sure young people have the practical skills they need to live independently, like managing money, finding a place to live, staying healthy, and knowing how to access support with jobs, education, benefits, and other services.

We also work with families, trusted adults, and other organisations to make sure young people feel safe at home, in their communities, and in places like school or college. We want them to build strong, trusting relationships that last.

Most importantly, we always listen to what young people have to say. Their views matter at every stage of planning and decision-making. We make sure they are heard, involved, and kept informed, because their voice is central to everything we do as their corporate parent.

After the age of 21, young people may choose not to engage with us or feel they wish to be fully independent. But, as a good parent, we will continue to be here and make sure they know how to contact us when the going gets tough, and we will ensure that all our young people know how to reach us when they need us.

Our local context

(Based on data as of 31 March 2025, unless stated otherwise)

- Hillingdon Council acted as corporate parent to **312** cared for children and **602** care experienced young people (18 to 25 years old).
- Among the total cared for children, **52** were unaccompanied children seeking asylum (UCSA), accounting for **17%** of the cared for children's population.
- Of those children cared for on 31 March 2025:
 - **38%** were White
 - **25%** were Black or Black British
 - **14%** were Asian or Asian British
 - **11%** were of Mixed ethnicities
 - **11%** were from Other ethnicities.

Where children live

- Of the cared for children at the end of the year, **8.3%** had three or more placements during the year.

- **47%** of our cared for children are placed with foster carers.
- **10.3%** are in residential children's homes, including Hillingdon's own resource.

Care experienced young people

- **80%** are in suitable accommodation. There were **167** young people (**84** cared for children and **83** care experienced young people) living in fully accredited and checked supported accommodation.
- **57%** are engaged in full-time education, employment, or training.
- **7%** of the above group are pursuing higher education.
- **12** young people are living in staying put arrangements
- **47** young people are residing within the Staying Close project.



Our pledge

Our promises to our children



Help and support to stay safe and healthy

We are committed to ensuring every child and young person in our care feels safe, secure, and supported in maintaining their physical and emotional wellbeing. We provide access to skilled carers and professionals trained in trauma-informed approaches and work closely with health partners to offer regular health checks, timely referrals, and support tailored to individual needs. Our ongoing relationship with health services ensures that young people have access to the right advice, activities, and services to help them lead healthy, fulfilling lives. We are always here to offer guidance and a listening ear, whenever it is needed.

What we do for cared for children

- All our foster carers and residential care workers are trained in PACE (a parenting programme Playful, Accepting, Curious and Empathetic) and social workers are trained in

trauma-informed practice to enable them to support our children's emotional wellbeing.

- Our social workers have access to the specialist Multi-Agency Psychology Service (MAPS), which supports decision-making regarding children and young people through an attachment-focused approach.
- The Strengths and Difficulties Score is used to assess children's wellbeing. Children with a score of 17 or higher are automatically referred to MAPS. Those who score between 14 and 17 are considered for additional support.
- Young people with complex health needs have support from the Hillingdon Transition Service for 14 to 19-year-olds moving from care to adulthood.
- Every child and young person is provided with an annual health assessment to ensure their physical and emotional wellbeing needs are

assessed and addressed. Those children under five years of age will receive assessments twice a year.

- We remain committed to collaborating closely with health professionals and partner agencies to promote the health and wellbeing of our children.
- All our cared for children are encouraged and supported to engage in extracurricular activities to support their social skills, self-esteem, and emotional wellbeing.

What we will do for our care experienced young people

- We provide ongoing support for our care experienced young people up to the age of 25. They can contact us via email or telephone for support and advice.
- Our children (aged 13 to 24) have priority access to services offered by the Youth Offer including Link Counselling  [careandsupport.hillingdon.gov.uk/Services/2244](https://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/Services/2244), sexual health and wellbeing programme (KISS)  www.hillingdon.gov.uk/sexual-health and SORTED  www.hillingdon.gov.uk/substance-misuse.
- We offer discounts at the council's gyms to improve health and wellbeing and promote healthy living.
- ASK JAN provides a comprehensive range of supportive services, including a dedicated helpline, recreational activity discounts, and up to six in-person counselling sessions.

What we are working on

- In partnership with health organisations, we are committed to providing young people transitioning from care with access to essential information, including their medical history, immunisation records, ongoing healthcare requirements, and other pertinent details.
- Multi-disciplinary transitions surgeries to plan adult health and social care for young people after 18, addressing both physical and emotional needs.
- All our young people are reviewed by our transitions panel from the age of 17 to facilitate a coordinated approach with our Adult Social Care teams and to ensure that the transition process is smooth and timely.

Support through education and planning for the future

Education is at the heart of unlocking a bright future, and we are committed to supporting our care experienced young people every step of the way. We guide them through school, college, and training, helping them set



realistic goals and celebrating their achievements. Working closely with the Virtual School and our partners, we offer practical advice on career choices, apprenticeships, further and higher education, ensuring each of our young people receive the guidance and support they need.

Our team collaborates with educators and employers to provide information about grants, bursaries, university life, and training opportunities. We also supply resources, such as laptops, for those continuing their studies and create tailored apprenticeship opportunities just for our care experienced young people. By working together, we empower every young person to make informed decisions about their future and help them plan for success.

We recognise the critical role that education plays in the lives of our children and how this supports both learning and safeguarding. The Education team is our fourth statutory partner in our Safeguarding Partnership, and plays a key role in planning and decision-making that promotes learning, education and safeguarding.

Hillingdon Virtual School

Hillingdon Virtual School is here for our children from early years right through to when they leave care, no matter where they live or go to school. The school works with other teams to make sure our children get the support they need, especially if they have additional learning needs or disabilities.

The team makes sure children and young people have access to good schools, training, or college courses. It also monitors their attendance, progress, and achievements, and makes sure Personal Education Plan (PEP) suits their learning style and goals.

What the Virtual School do for children we care for

- All children and young people under our care will be assigned a designated representative from the Virtual School to support them if they are not engaged in education, employment, or training (NEET), and to assist in preparing them for educational or employment opportunities.
- We will ensure that their care plan is regularly reviewed alongside their PEP.
- They organise residential trips (like to Jamie's Farm) and enrichment activities to help our children build friendships and confidence.
- They can provide the relevant tools to ensure that our children's education is promoted, such as laptops to facilitate learning.

For all care experienced young people

- They support our young people beyond school age with their education.
- They support our care experienced young people, both within and outside Hillingdon, to access college and university opportunities.
- They offer comprehensive information regarding university life, including details on grants, bursaries, and expectations for their academic experience.
- They offer laptops to our young people who have been in education for over 12 weeks after school age to support them with their studies.
- They support our young people claiming asylum to learn English through ESOL courses.
- They offer financial help with university applications and student finance.
- They have created apprenticeship opportunities just for our care experienced young people, and support with interview preparation.

- They will offer guidance to assist our young people in finding and securing employment that aligns with their skills and interests.

What they are working on

- Enhancing methods for monitoring progress to ensure timely intervention when support is required for our children or young people, as well as to acknowledge their achievements as they occur in real time.
- Collaborating with other services to make sure everyone understands their role and works well together.
- Raising our levels of challenge to schools in tackling any low expectations or lack of ambition for our cared for children and care experienced young people
- Introducing an early years-specific PEP for two, three and four-year-olds, ensuring their individual educational needs are identified, supported, and monitored closely.
- Developing a post-16 model as a PEP through consultation with our care experienced young people, those in our care, and formally through the Children in Care Council.
- Continuing to support our young people after they leave our care to further their aspirations in education, training, and employment.

Celebrate achievements

We recognise and celebrate the successes of our children and young people, big or small. Whether it's academic accomplishments, personal milestones, or acts of kindness and resilience, we make sure to acknowledge and reward their efforts. Celebrating achievements helps build self-esteem and a sense of belonging, and we are proud to share in their joys and support them through challenges.



What we do for our cared for children

- Acknowledgement of school achievements at every PEP meeting.
- Discussion at Looked After Children's reviews about personal achievements.
- Nominate our children and young people for external and internal awards.

What we do for our care experienced young people

Every year, we celebrate the achievements of our cared for children and care experienced young people at the annual Kids in Care Awards (KICA). This is Hillingdon's flagship event to honour the achievements of cared for children and care experienced young people. It's a vibrant, youth-led event that grows every year, attended by hundreds of children and carers, supported by staff and elected members who volunteer their time to celebrate the achievements of our children. Any professional working with our care experienced children and young people



can nominate them for a KICA. They will then be invited to the annual event that features:

- **a red carpet ceremony** with awards presented by civic leaders such as the Mayor and senior council officers
- **fun activities** like bouncy castles, face painting, magicians, stilt walkers, caricature artists, and interactive games
- **mocktails, food trucks, and gift bags**, all curated with input from our young people themselves
- **participation** – year-on-year we receive several nominations for our children, with 2025 having a record-breaking 927 nominations.

Participation and voice in celebration

It is also about empowerment:

- the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and Youth Voice Forum shape services, events, and training like 'Walking in Our Shoes'
- our young people contribute to staff recruitment, the SEND strategy, and community safety projects like 'Making Hayes Safer'
- their input influences events, such as Pride and Eid, ensuring cultural relevance and inclusivity.



Listen and involve children and young people in decisions about their lives

We believe the voices of our children and young people are central to everything we do. We make it a priority to listen, involve them in planning, and keep them informed at every stage. Their views shape our services and decisions, ensuring the support provided truly meets their needs and wishes. We encourage open dialogue and provide opportunities for young people to express themselves, knowing their opinions are valued and respected. We strive to always achieve a meaningful co-production with our young people and make them our partners in decision-making and in shaping the future of the service.

To do this, we use different ways to engage such as:

- assessments
- co-production and sharing of Care Plans
- child-centred PEPs
- participation in Child Looked After Reviews and support to chair them if they so choose
- various participation groups
- co-production of our strategies and models of working
- involvement in our interview panels for appointments at all levels
- continued training of all our staff and across partnership including the Walking in Our Shoes training
- health assessments completed with consent and in partnership
- fostering or adoption records (if these apply)
- pathway planning developed and agreed together depending on the individual's strengths and needs
- compliments and complaints.

Our children and young people's views matter, and we will make sure they are written down and taken seriously.



If our children and young people feel they need additional support to get their voice heard, they have access to an independent advocate to consult with, represent their views and/or advocate on their behalf.

In all we do, we remain committed to gathering feedback and really listening to what we are told and thus ensuring that the voice of our children and young people is heard and they are meaningfully involved in the decisions and plans we make about services and about their lives.

Help all children feel they belong

We want every child and young person to feel accepted, included, and proud of who they are. Our approach is centred on creating a warm, supportive environment where everyone feels at home, valued, and connected to those around them.

By nurturing trusting relationships and supporting each young person's sense of identity, we help them to understand their own story and what 'family' means to them now and in the years ahead. We encourage children to stay connected to people who matter most, whether that's family, siblings, friends, or supportive adults, and we make sure to involve them in decisions about how these

important relationships are maintained.

We recognise that friends, siblings, and PAs often provide vital support, so we actively help children and young people to build and maintain these strong relationships. At the same time, we celebrate cultural identity and promote participation in community and extracurricular activities, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to feel a true sense of belonging.

By consistently checking in and listening to our children and young people, we strive to make sure their needs are met and that their voices are at the heart of our care planning. In doing so, we help them to feel secure, confident, and connected to a community that truly values them.

What we will do for our cared for children

- Facilitate Family Group Conferences with families as early as possible and assist them in identifying other potential family members who could provide care if children are unable to remain at home.
- Support and promote strong family relationships and help our children stay connected in a way that is right for them.
- Provide foster carers with greater support for teenagers and ensure every child enjoys a stable home life.
- Support children in understanding their experience in care through direct work, the use of words and pictures, life story books, and letters.
- Helping those who need extra support to navigate their identity.
- Ensure children have access to those who can provide support, such as befrienders and advocates.
- Help and encourage our children to build strong support networks, so they feel confident and connected as they grow into adulthood.
- Hold placement stability meetings to proactively address and prevent

placement disruptions and breakdowns.

- Proactively evaluate the potential for reunification with birth parents when it is safe, appropriate, aligns with the expressed wishes and feelings of our children, and is supported by our assessment as being in their best interests.
- When it is necessary for children to move homes, we will implement parallel planning whenever possible to determine the most suitable home and minimise delays in securing a school place, ensuring both transitions are coordinated effectively.
- Collaborate with schools to ensure each of our children has access to a trusted individual for support.
- Invite our cared for children and care experienced young people to participate in organised events and activities, such as summer BBQs, Eid celebrations, and Christmas gatherings, providing opportunities to connect with their peers.

What we will do for our care experienced young people

- Provide stable housing during term time to ensure that our young people with care experience can maintain stability while pursuing their education.
- Our care experienced young people are supported in their new tenancies with a Setting up Home Allowance and outreach support from our providers.
- The right home and right care will be made through careful matching and support including providing a 'Staying Close' home following a needs-led assessment.

What we are working on

- To provide a choice of home and for our young people to be involved in the selection of the right home for them.
- To develop clear processes for input



into decisions regarding placement moves in order that educational provision is considered a priority.

- To continue to recruit foster carers who can meet the needs of our children and young people and support them to be matched on a long-term basis.
- Building new residential homes in Hillingdon so as many children as possible can stay living in the borough, close to their communities, families, schools and local services.
- Enabling foster families to support each other and their children through the Mockingbird Programme.
- Collaborating with housing services to support transition to adulthood and assisting with securing and maintaining tenancy.
- Collaborating with housing providers to offer a broader selection of housing options for our care experienced young people, including YMCA, shared housing, and semi-independent accommodations, determined by a needs-led assessment.
- Continue to work closely with schools to increase their understanding of the care journey, through training, advice, advocacy and guidance.

Ensure young people feel fully prepared for transition into adulthood

We aim to prepare young people for adulthood as a journey, recognising that developing independence is a gradual process. Our support continues up to the age of 25, ensuring that each young person has access to assistance as they navigate this important transition. By teaching essential life skills, such as budgeting, cooking, and independent living, we equip young people with practical tools for everyday life.

The transition from care to independence is a significant milestone. Through our Transition to Adulthood service, we aim to build confidence, resilience, and the necessary skills for successful adulthood. Our guidance extends to areas including health, employment, and housing, ensuring young people are ready to face a range of challenges. Support and advice remain available beyond the age of 21, so young people know they can seek reassurance or guidance whenever needed.

We recognise the unique needs and experiences of care experienced young people. Our approach centres on listening to their views and adapting our support to fit their circumstances and ambitions. We are committed to breaking down barriers, reducing adversity, and enabling young people to achieve their goals in their own time and on their own terms.

Key objectives

What we want, is for our care experienced young people to:

- experience a smooth transition into adulthood and have the same opportunities and outcomes as their peers
- have access to high quality, consistent support up to the age of 25
- have access to education, employment and training (EET) opportunities

- have access to safe, affordable and stable accommodation
- be safe and know how to keep themselves safe
- be healthy and have a good level of emotional and physical wellbeing
- build independence through the development of practical life skills
- maintain and develop positive relationships and build social inclusion.

How do we achieve these in practice?

Allocation of a PA

Each care experienced young person is assigned a PA from the age of 16 who remains a consistent contact point until they reach 21 and then ongoing support is provided by the service until the age of 25 if needed. Our PAs are passionate about advocating for our care experienced young people and will work to form a positive relationship with the young adults they are supporting.

Pathway planning

From the age of 16, all young people are given the opportunity to choose their PA, ensuring their support is tailored to their preferences. At this stage, every young person is dual allocated with both a PA and a social worker, providing comprehensive guidance and support up to the age of 18. Each young person will



be provided with a clear Pathway Plan which they are encouraged to co-produce that is reviewed regularly. The plan will identify goals and the support needed to achieve them. We want to ensure all young people have a clear plan before they turn 18, including key partners such as Adult Social Care and Health where necessary.

Housing and accommodation:

We provide access to a range of accommodation options, including supported lodgings, semi-independent living, Staying Close, staying put arrangements and help accessing social housing or private renting such as houses of multiple occupation (HMOs) or shared accommodation.

We encourage and facilitate staying put arrangements, allowing young people to remain with their foster carers beyond age 18 where appropriate.

We have the Staying Close programme for young people who need some additional support post-18 and a referral to Hillingdon Transition Panel when young people have identified care and support needs.

We know that sourcing suitable accommodation, which meets the needs of care experienced young people is challenging in London. This is due to the national and local shortage of housing.



That is another reason why we keep this as one of our ongoing priorities for our young people and we work in partnership with all our colleagues to ensure all our care experienced young people can access suitable and affordable accommodation within a clear housing pathway.

Be safe

We want all our young people to feel safe in their homes and communities. The Transition to Adulthood service will identify vulnerable young people and engage them in developing a personal safety plan. We will develop further the relationships with local community groups and run workshops to engage young people in discussing issues around how to keep themselves safe.

Practical support and life skills

We know our young people do not always feel ready for independence. We will work to ensure all young people have the help they need to develop key essential living skills, such as cooking, cleaning, budgeting and managing their money. We will engage with the homes where young people are living prior to turning 18 to ensure these skills are being taught in preparation for independence.

Relationships and inclusion

We seek for all our young people to feel part of a community and a sense of belonging. We offer opportunities for our young people to socialise and develop relationships such as a weekly football group, summer residential, summer BBQ and KICA. We would like to expand and develop our offer for social activities and groups to promote social inclusion for our care experienced young people.

What we have done

- Successfully extended our PA service to young people leaving our care up to the age of 25.
- Supported care experienced young people to remain with their foster



carer through our staying put initiative to receive continued support in a family environment.

- Developed the Staying Close pathway to ensure those young people who need additional support prior to moving into independence will have that option.

Key challenges and priorities

Our ongoing objective is to enhance accommodation pathways for care experienced young people. However, further action is required. Like other London boroughs, securing sustainable housing in Hillingdon continues to present significant challenges.

What we will do

- Ensure that our children and young people are supported and prepared to live and thrive in their own accommodation.
- Our young people who are eligible for adult services will be identified early and have a planned transition from Children's to Adult Social Care.
- Assist our young people to develop

good support networks and sustain significant relationships to reduce the impact of loneliness, isolation, or lack of confidence as they grow into adulthood.

- Build robust processes for monitoring and evaluation around employment, education and training (EET), accommodation and health.
- Increase engagement with our care experienced young people to gather service feedback and ensure co-production.
- Auditing of Pathway Plans to ensure consistency across the services.
- Increase partnership working and develop key relationships with health, housing, education, employers, and voluntary and community sector organisations.
- Review the joint housing protocol to ensure there are clear pathways that are well communicated and understood and to look at developing a care leavers' pathway.

Hillingdon's Local Offer

We have a Local Offer for our care experienced young people which is published and promoted so our young people know what support is available and how to access it. The Local Offer provides a comprehensive range of support and benefits aimed at helping them transition smoothly into adulthood. The offer includes financial assistance, accommodation options, health and wellbeing support, and educational opportunities. These include but are not limited to:

Financial support

- Weekly funds matching Universal Credit for those without access to public funds.
- Setting-up-home allowance of up to £3,000.
- A fully-funded travelcard for those living in London.
- A bursary of £2,000 over three to four years for university students.
- Financial support for driving lessons up until the age of 21.
- Emergency cash and food vouchers up to £30 a year.
- Assistance with vital documents like passports and driving licences.
- Coverage of up to 50 per cent of naturalisation fees for non-British citizens.
- Funding for interview clothes and travel costs.
- Financial assistance for travelling to asylum interviews.
- Birthday bonus of £100 for those turning 18.
- Matching Child Benefit and Universal Credit payments for parents without access to public funds.

We are reviewing our finance policy to ensure that this is straightforward and easy for young people to access and

understand what financial support they are entitled to once they leave care.

Housing and accommodation

- 'Staying put' allows our care experienced young people to remain in their foster homes after turning 18.
- 'Staying Close' offers support for our care experienced young people who want to live independently but still need some short-term assistance to get them there.
- Social housing registration at the age of 18, with help exploring private rentals and applying for Discretionary Housing Payment.
- Support for moving back with family, including Family Group Conferences.
- Safe, affordable accommodation with YMCA/P3 support, where there is an assessed need.
- During non-term time whilst studying at university, we can cover up to 13 weeks rent.
- Tailored support for those with learning disabilities or complex needs.
- Council tax exemption for our care experienced young people up to the age of 21, with a needs-led assessment for exemption for anyone aged between 21 and 25.

Health and wellbeing

- Free dental and eye care for those aged under 19 and in full-time education or receiving benefits.
- Assistance with applying for free prescriptions.
- Support from the Hillingdon Transition Service for 14 to 19-year-olds moving from care to adulthood.
- Mental health support through various services, including drama therapy, wellbeing sessions, and confidential advice for drug and alcohol issues.

- ASK JAN offers a variety of supportive services, including a single contact helpline, discounts on recreational activities, and up to six in-person counselling sessions.
- Health colleagues are leading on formulating a Health Passport and it is a priority for the newly appointed Transition Nurse.

Education and employment


- Tailored advice and guidance from Hillingdon Virtual School up until the age of 25.
- Support for exploring further and higher education, apprenticeships, and employment opportunities.
- Access to employment support for young people with special needs.
- Financial support for higher education through UCAS and student finance.
- Additional support from organisations like Buttle UK, Propel UK, Catch22, and Drive Forward Foundation.
- A laptop allowance of £420 is available to keep young people connected and to promote their educational journey. Up to £150 a year is also provided for essential learning tools.

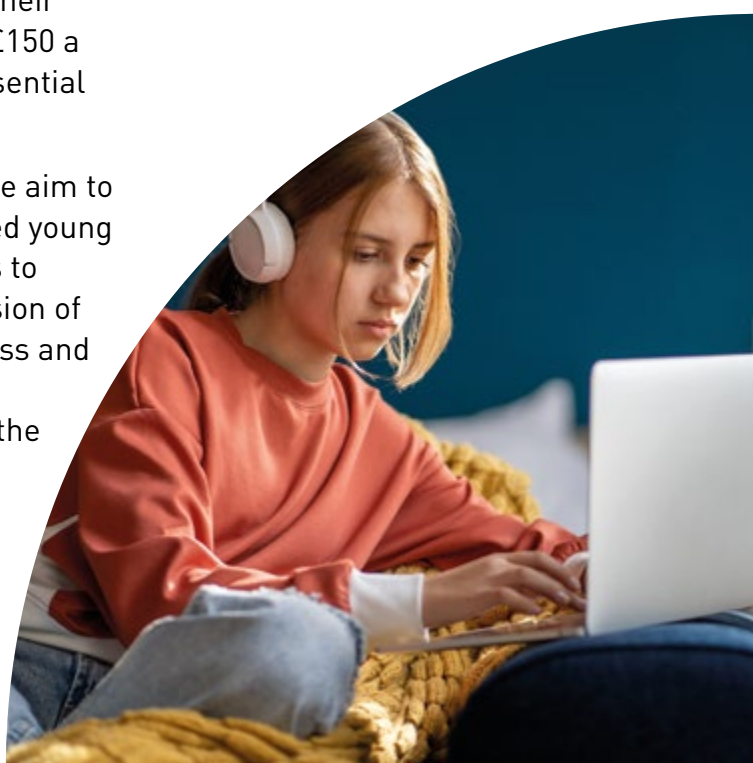
By providing these resources, we aim to ensure that our care experienced young people have the necessary tools to thrive and become the best version of themselves. Increased awareness and accessibility is still high on our agenda and we aim to promote the Local Offer more effectively to ensure all our care experienced young people are aware of the support available to them. By continuously improving and adapting our Local Offer, we strive to provide the best possible support for our

young people, helping them transition smoothly into adulthood and achieve their full potential.

This information is regularly updated to ensure our care experienced young people receive the best level of support. The link below provides the latest updates and will be reviewed and revised regularly over the next five years. Updates will take place in collaboration with our young people, through co-production, in response to government changes, and to ensure services continuously improve and demonstrate evidence of genuine co-production. As a result, specific details may change as services evolve.

For more information, visit

 www.hillingdon.gov.uk/care-leavers.



Corporate Parenting Panel

Hillingdon's Corporate Parenting Panel provides strategic leadership, oversight and scrutiny to ensure that our cared for children and care experienced young people are supported to thrive. It is a key forum for accountability, co-production, and continuous improvement across services. The panel is co-chaired by elected members and our young people.

The Children in Care Councils (CiCCs) directly support the Corporate Parenting Panel to measure and monitor the effectiveness and quality of corporate parenting in Hillingdon. Their purpose is to provide young people with a forum to collectively voice their ideas and views; to challenge our care and support; influence service improvements and drive change; contribute to the development of strategic plans and hold their corporate parents to account.

Children in Care Councils

- Hillingdon has three established and well-attended CiCCs – Talkers, Step Up and Stepping Out – who meet monthly and are part of the regional children in care council network.
- Children and young people have a say in how decisions are made about themselves and their care, and services that affect them. They have



an opportunity to influence those decisions through the children in care councils.

- Our CiCCs have a powerful collective voice. Their views are presented at each Corporate Parenting Panel and at social work team and management meetings. Members of Stepping Out attend and co-chair the Corporate Parenting Panel and meet with our directors every three months.
- Young people participate in the recruitment of staff and foster carers.
- Young people with care experience are members of the Fostering Panel.

Purpose and responsibilities of the Corporate Parenting Panel

Voice and influence of children and young people

The panel ensures that our children and young people have regular opportunities to share their experiences and influence decisions about their care. Their views are actively sought and embedded in service development, policy design, and strategic planning.

Co-production and engagement

Our young people are engaged in shaping services through structured forums and direct participation in the panel. Their contributions inform improvements and ensure that services reflect their lived experiences. Annual reports document the impact of participation, highlighting how the views and experiences of our children and young people have shaped policies and practices. By embedding co-production in our strategic objectives, we have created services that truly reflect the needs and aspirations of those we support.

Strategic oversight

The panel maintains a strategic overview of all policies, procedures, and initiatives affecting our cared for children and care experienced young people. It ensures alignment with local and national priorities and that services are responsive to the needs of our children and young people.

Performance monitoring and accountability

The panel receives regular performance reports, including key indicators, complaints and compliments, audit findings, and inspection outcomes. It monitors the quality and effectiveness of services delivered by the council, partners, and commissioned providers, and ensures that action is taken where services fall short.

Celebrating achievements

The panel highlights and celebrates the achievements of our children and young people by publicly recognising their successes in a variety of ways. This may include sharing their stories and accomplishments during panel meetings, featuring them in annual reports, and organising events or awards to acknowledge their positive outcomes. The panel ensures these achievements are promoted within the council and the wider community, creating a culture of encouragement and aspiration among our children and young people in care. By doing so, the panel not only celebrates individual milestones but also reinforces the value of supporting and empowering young people to reach their full potential.

Service review and challenge

The panel reviews annual reports from key services including adoption, fostering,

residential care, the Virtual School, and independent reviewing services. It acts as a critical friend, challenging practice and promoting excellence.

What are we doing?

- Continuing to ensure representation in the panel is diverse and activities are inclusive.
- Ensuring our children and young people continue to be involved in decision making platforms that shape their future.
- Communication between Elected Members and our care experienced young people is facilitated through the CiCCs.
- The needs of our cared for children and care experienced young people is prioritised across the council, led by the Corporate Parenting Panel which listens and responds to these views.
- All policies which impact directly on our children and young people are made available to the CiCC and participation groups for comment and consideration, prior to approval. This enables our children and young people to be key contributors to policy





development and ensures implementation can be considered from their perspective.

- Our children and young people will continue to be involved in the recruitment of staff, training of officers and development of information, such as leaflets and website design.
- Our children and young people will continue to monitor and develop the Children in Care Pledge and Care Experienced Young People's Local Offer.

Impact measure

- The Corporate Parenting Panel, informed by the working groups and Children's Rights and Participation team will collate a 'You said, we did' register to evidence the changes made as the direct result of the views of young people. This will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to evidence the impact of our young people's views on service development. These changes and input will be implemented by project work undertaken in working groups.
- To ensure our strategy remains dynamic and responsive, robust data collection and quality assurance processes are integral. We are enhancing our approach to monitoring, evaluation, and impact measurement through robust data

collection and quality assurance, which are essential for driving improvement and accountability. We will implement dashboards, regular audits, and feedback loops to monitor outcomes and service quality.

- Performance reports will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel and CiCCs, ensuring transparency and enabling us to celebrate successes and address areas for development. By using data to inform decision-making, we will continuously adapt our services to meet the evolving needs of our children and young people.
- Record policies presented to CiCCs, with records of their feedback and consultation impact.
- Number of completed/reviewed Pathway Plans collaboratively written with our young people.
- Number of young people participating in cared for children reviews and those chairing them.

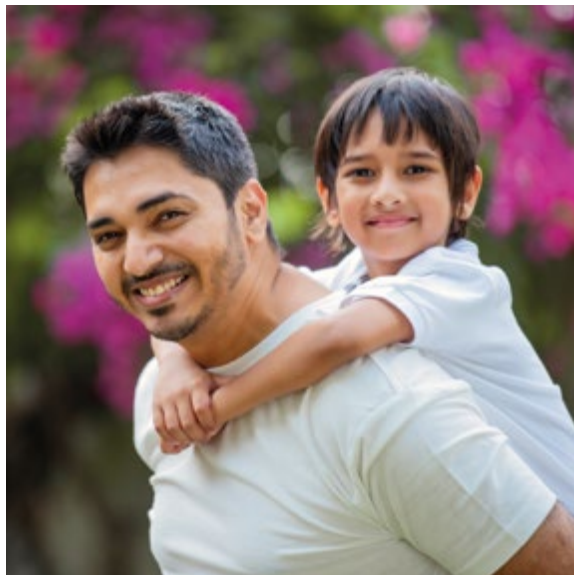
Future aspirations for children and young people in care

Our priorities are informed by feedback from children and young people, insights gained from inspection activities such as those conducted by Ofsted, and analysis of local data. These aspirations demonstrate our ongoing commitment to enhancing outcomes and experiences for children in our care and care experienced young people in Hillingdon. While significant progress has been made and further work is underway, we continually strive for excellence on behalf of our children and young people. The following summarises key initiatives and ambitions that guide our efforts.

- **Early intervention and prevention:** Early intervention is at the heart of our approach to reducing the need for children to enter care. Through strengthened Family Hubs, transformed Family Help services, and Family Group Conferences, we will support families to stay together safely wherever possible. Multi-disciplinary teams will work collaboratively to identify and address issues at the earliest stage, preventing escalation and promoting positive outcomes. Our Families First model will ensure that families receive the right support at the right time, empowering them to overcome challenges and build resilience.
- **Kinship care:** We are committed to increasing the number of children cared for within their extended family or connected network. Through early Family Decision Making meetings, we identify potential kinship carers to reduce reliance on mainstream foster placements.
- **Unaccompanied children seeking asylum:** We continue to ensure timely transfers through the NTS and

provide tailored support for children as they transition into care and adulthood.

- **Homeless 16 and 17-year-olds:** We have updated our response to young people presenting as homeless by providing help at the earliest point and working closely with housing services where this appears to be needed to ensure advocacy and support are in place and will continue to strengthen this area.
- **Workforce stability:** To deliver outstanding care and support, we recognise the importance of a stable, skilled, and motivated workforce. Hillingdon Council is committed to investing in the wellbeing and professional development of our staff, including social workers, PAs, and foster carers. We will continue to develop peer support networks, and recognition programmes to celebrate achievements and foster a culture of continuous learning. Our recruitment campaigns will target underrepresented groups and promote flexible working arrangements, ensuring our workforce reflects the diversity of



our community. By prioritising staff wellbeing and career progression, we aim to retain talented professionals and maintain high quality, consistent relationships for our children and young people.

- **Local provision development:** We are expanding our in-house provision, small residential homes, and supported accommodation, to meet the diverse needs of our children locally.
- **Permanency planning:** We support children to return home where safe and appropriate, or to achieve permanency through adoption, special guardianship, or long-term fostering.
- **Foster carer recruitment and retention:** We are increasing the number of foster carers with the right skills across the borough.
- **Placement sufficiency and quality:** Ensuring every one of our children and young people has access to a safe, stable, and local home is central to our strategy. We will develop a formal sufficiency strategy, setting out our current capacity, projected needs, and plans to address gaps in fostering, kinship care, and residential provision. Annual reviews of placement data will inform targeted recruitment campaigns, expansion of the Mockingbird Programme, and enhanced support for kinship carers. By working closely with local providers and housing partners, we will increase the availability of high quality homes within Hillingdon, minimising disruption and promoting continuity for our children and young people.
- **Education, employment and training (EET):** We are increasing access to education, employment, and training opportunities, including apprenticeships across the council, partner agencies, and local businesses.

- **Youth Justice and Restorative Practice:**

We are enhancing restorative responses for our cared for children who offend, working jointly with Youth Justice and Probation to support rehabilitation and reduce reoffending.

- **Participation and innovation:** We are developing creative ways to engage our children and young people, including drop-ins, co-production, and 'you said, we did', to improve access to services and information.
- **Transitions to adulthood:** We are strengthening support for our care experienced young people through our transformation of service delivery, including those transitioning to Adult Services, ensuring continuity of care and access to specialist support for disabled young people.
- **Step Across initiatives:** We are implementing Step Across to Fostering and Step Across to Supported Homes to reduce reliance on residential care and provide enhanced support to carers within family-based settings.

Making it happen

We aim to turn our ambitions and aspirations into reality by working closely with our young people and ensuring that they have an active role in informing our strategic objectives. We are committed to working in partnership with our young people and ensuring co-production and collaboration is at the heart of our approach. By embedding young people's voices in decision-making and holding ourselves accountable through robust monitoring and evaluation, we are dedicated to turning our ambitions and aspirations into meaningful, lasting change for every child and young person in Hillingdon.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO PUBLISHED ADMISSIONS NUMBER (PAN) OF FIELD END INFANT SCHOOL

Committee name	Children, Families & Education Select Committee
Officer reporting	Abi Preston – Director of Education & SEND
Papers with report	Appendix 1 – Proposed Community School Admissions Arrangements 2027-2028
Ward	South Ruislip, All

HEADLINES

Hillingdon Council has a statutory responsibility to secure sufficient early years and school places for children resident in Hillingdon. Following review and discussions with the school, the Council is proposing to reduce the Published Admission Number (PAN) for Field End Infant School from 90 (three-form entry) to 60 (two-form entry). This PAN reduction will come into effect from September 2027 and there will be sufficient places to ensure that local residents and siblings can access places at the school. This reduction in PAN will also reduce the distance priority radius from 1,000 metres to 750 metres in line with the Council's admissions arrangements.

The proposed changes to the school admissions criteria will ensure that the Council continues to provide fair placements for children, so that priority is given to children to access places at schools as close to their home as possible.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Children, Families & Education Select Committee:

- 1. Review the proposal to reduce the Published Admissions Number for Field End Infant School from 90 to 60;**
- 2. Note the 4 responses from the consultation on a PAN change to community primary phase;**
- 3. Note the proposals submitted to the Local Authority following formal consultations from non-community schools: Field End Junior School to reduce its Planned Admissions Number from 90 to 60, St Martin's Church of England Primary School to reduce its Planned Admissions Number from 60 to 30, and Park Academy West London to reduce its Planned Admissions Number from 180 to 150, all taking effect from September 2027; and**
- 4. Provide comments to be included in the Cabinet report which will be presented on 19 February 2026.**

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

As an education authority, the Council must plan for a sufficiency of places and efficient use of resources. There has been a slight decline in demand across the primary sector since 2018, with some fluctuations, but the overall level of primary school surplus places continues to be high.

Each year the Council reviews the number of places against pupils rolls and projections and considers changing PAN in some schools.

Across the borough, small annual changes up and down are needed to meet parental demand. This ensures schools and the authority best meet the needs of all pupils across the Borough and make effective use of resources in schools. The PAN is the 'operating figure', and the physical building remains the same. Academy, Foundation and Voluntary Aided (VA) schools make their own decisions, and they must consult the Council and others on proposed reductions, but their Governors/ Trusts can agree temporary or permanent increases or decreases. The Cabinet is the relevant authority for the community primary schools, such as Field End Infant School.

The Local Authority recognise a need to reduce the published admission number in one of our community schools, by 30 places. This is due to demographic changes leading to declining pupil rolls and Reception intakes, over the past few years which is projected to continue for the foreseeable future. There would be no difference for current pupils after the proposed change takes effect from the Reception intake in 2027, and there would still be sufficient places to meet future demand from local residents for at least the next 5 to 7 years.

Following a review of school places, it is proposed to consult to reduce the Published Admission Numbers for:

- Field End Infant School - from 90 (three-form entry) to 60 (two-form entry) from September 2027. All local residents will still be able to access places there. This reduction will also reduce the distance priority radius from **1,000m to 750m** in line with our admissions arrangements.

Reduction of Published Admissions Numbers

The purpose of the statutory School Admissions Code (see [Background paper 1](#)) is to ensure that all school places for maintained schools (excluding maintained special schools) and academies are allocated in an open and fair way. The Code contains mandatory requirements, such as setting a Published Admissions Number for each school. The admission arrangements to community schools are determined by the Local Authority as the 'admission authority.'

In drawing up the admission arrangements to schools, admission authorities must ensure that the practices and the criteria used to decide the allocation of school places are fair, clear and objective. Parents should be able to look at a set of arrangements and understand easily how places for that school will be allocated. All schools must have admission arrangements that clearly set out how children will be admitted. The admission authority for the school must also set out in the arrangements the oversubscription criteria against which places will be allocated at the school when there are more applications than places and the order in which the criteria will be applied.

All community schools have a PAN in accordance with the School Admissions Code 2021. This is the number of school places that the admission authority must offer in each relevant age group (Reception, Year 3 for Junior and Year 7 for Secondary) of a school for which it is the admission authority. Admission numbers are part of a school's admission arrangements.

Currently there are 14.74% of vacant places across all primary schools (May Census 2025). Pupil numbers will always fluctuate but the aim is to have around 8% vacancies which will ensure there will be sufficient places to meet parental demand in each area and for those moving in mid-year, securing stability for all schools. Having schools with a level of their local demand significantly below their PAN (around 30 pupils), means some schools can attract few additional pupils during

the year, requiring more classes to be run. This situation is not financially sustainable, with an inherent risk that if pupils join or leave the school, a class may need to be opened or closed, or very small class sizes may be in place. To balance school budgets, classes need to include around 25 or more pupils. Schools with declining or volatile rolls face the risk of significant changes in their annual budget, which could lead to a need to restructure or could lead to a deficit budget.

The aim of PAN reductions is to match the operational level of schools to local demand and improve the focus of resources in each school on their pupils and reduce the risk of budget deficits. Meanwhile the physical capacity will remain available if demand rises, when it is possible to increase the PAN immediately, without consultation. Should this be the case, officers would recommend that future increases to PANs be implemented on a temporary, year by year basis, while continuing to monitor parental demand.

Hillingdon has one of the largest pupil populations in London with 52,709 pupils on roll at schools in the Borough in the May 2025 census. The past few years of roll volatility require annual review and regular changes in PAN, to adjust the 'operating capacity' particularly when school finances are so challenging. Most London local Authorities have agreed or are planning reductions in primary capacity in response to falling demand for primary school places. As the birth rate has decreased, reception numbers have plateaued since 2016 and new pupil roll growth is more likely to come from new housing developments and migration into various year groups, and not just into reception classes. Half of primary schools are full to capacity but there are pockets of surplus places in a few schools that continue to grow. The demographic changes in the Borough, short and long-term effects of Brexit, Covid and employment and affordability of housing are all factors being monitored.

Field End Infant School

Field End Infant School have raised concerns about changes in their local demand and the governing body supports the reduction since it will enable the school to focus their budget and resources better for pupils, and in turn supporting school improvement. The governing body have agreed to increase the PAN should local demand for places rise. Importantly, though the process to reduce PAN requires considerable data and consultation, it is easy to reverse, so admissions authorities can quickly respond to a rise in demand and decide to admit over PAN on a temporary or permanent basis as necessary.

Below is a summary of the timeline for the ongoing discussions related to falling pupil numbers with Field End Infant School:

- October to December 2021: Consultation held between the school and the Local Authority on reducing the PAN of Field End Infant from 120 to 90, effective from September 2023
- February 2021: Cabinet approved PAN reduction from 120 to 90 effective September 2023 (see [Background paper 2](#))
- May-July 2025: Field End Infant School raised concerns about declining Reception numbers with multiple meetings with LA to monitor intake and understand the financial implications and explore options
- September 2025: Field End Junior School sent a letter outlining their intention to reduce their PAN and agreed to co-ordinate any consultation with LA and Field End Infant School
- September to October 2025: further meetings with both schools to discuss the consultation timeline and steps to support communities.

As you can see from the table below, Field End Infant School has seen an overall decline in pupil numbers over the past five years. Enrolment dropped from 291 pupils in 2020 to 207 in 2025, despite a reduction in PAN from 120 to 90 in 2023. Reception intake has remained well below capacity, falling from 82 pupils in 2020 to 67 in 2025. This trend, detailed in the School Organisation Plan (see [Background paper 3](#)), reflects reduced local demand and has led to financial pressures, reinforcing the need for further a PAN reduction to ensure sustainability. If this proposal is approved, Pupil Planning Area 5 would still have 8.15% of places vacant, which aligns with the Local Authority's expectations to maintain sufficient capacity for in year admissions.

Field End Infant School							
Census	Nursery	Whole School PAN	Pupils on Roll				% Vacancies
			Rec	Yr 1	Yr 2	Total on Roll	
Oct-20	66	360	82	109	100	291	19%
Oct-21	80	360	80	81	97	258	28%
Oct-22	59	360	98	88	82	268	26%
Oct-23	62	330*	70	94	80	244	26%
Oct-24	58	300	81	74	85	240	20%
Oct-25	59	270	67	72	68	207	23%

*PAN reduction came into effect (120 to 90)

Non-Community School consultations

Three academies, acting as their own admissions authorities, are also consulting on proposals to reduce their Published Admissions Numbers due to sustained declines in pupil numbers with the details of the proposals listed below:

- Field End Junior School are proposing to reduce the schools PAN from 90 to 60, effective from September 2027. The decline in pupil numbers can be seen in the table below. The consultation period concluded on 15 December.

Field End Junior School							
Census	Whole School PAN	Pupils on Roll					% Vacancies
		Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5	Yr 6	Total on Roll	
Oct-20	480	97	105	100	105	407	15.21%
Oct-21	480	87	90	99	92	368	23.33%
Oct-22	480	91	85	88	92	356	25.83%
Oct-23	360*	70	86	87	84	327	9.17%
Oct-24	360	57	70	70	89	286	20.56%
Oct-25	360	75	50	68	66	259	28%

*PAN reduction came into effect (120 to 90)

- St Martin's Church of England Primary School are proposing to reduce the school's PAN from 60 to 30, effective from September 2027. The decline in pupil numbers can be seen in the table below. The consultation period will conclude on 19 January 2026.

St Martin's Church of England Primary School											
Census	Nursery	Whole School PAN	Pupils on Roll								% Vacancies
			Rec	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5	Yr 6	Total on Roll	
Oct-20	13	380	46	57	48	43	44	30		268	29.47%
Oct-21	18	420	41	45	51	47	43	37	29	293	30.24%
Oct-22	5	420	44	41	50	42	44	46	34	301	28.33%
Oct-23	16	420	19	37	36	42	38	40	36	248	31.11%
Oct-24	7	420	26	18	34	37	39	40	39	233	44.52%
Oct-25	11	420	19	28	18	28	29	40	35	197	53%

- Park Academy West London secondary school are proposing to reduce the school's PAN from 180 to 150, effective from September 2027. The decline in pupil numbers from 2023 in particular, can be seen in the table below. Although the overall total pupil numbers remain slightly higher than they were in 2020, projections indicate that the size of the Year 7 cohort will gradually decrease in the coming years. This trend is detailed in the School Organisation Plan (see [Background paper 3](#)), which outlines demographic changes and their impact on future admissions. The consultation period will conclude on Monday 26 January 2026.

Park Academy West London								
Census	Whole School PAN	Pupils on Roll						% Vacancies
		Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10	Yr 11	Total on Roll	
Oct-20	1260	165	168	138	122	127	720	42.86%
Oct-21	1260	178	154	160	102	117	711	43.57%
Oct-22	1260	169	177	151	159	103	759	39.76%
Oct-23	1260	169	165	177	140	151	802	36.35%
Oct-24	1260	161	155	162	165	144	787	37.54%
Oct-25	1260	127	152	142	156	153	730	42.06%

A decision on all proposals is expected during the Spring 2026 term, following the completion of the consultation process. All schools must determine/ finalise their admissions arrangements by 28 February 2026 and publish them on their school's website by 15 March 2026, in line with the School Admissions Code.

RESIDENT BENEFIT & CONSULTATION

Over the past year, officers have undertaken a comprehensive review of all schools and discussed the proposal with the headteacher of Field End Infant School. The Headteacher informed parents during the autumn term, via the school newsletter, that a reduction in PAN was under consideration. This proposal would give stability to classes and benefit pupils, and siblings and other local parents would still be able to access the school.

The proposed changes, once agreed, will support fair and equitable school placements, maintaining the principle that children should be prioritised at schools closest to their home.

An inclusive consultation programme has been delivered, including the following elements:

- 'Have your say' via the Council website.

- Communication issued to all Hillingdon schools, advising them of the consultation with link to proposed admissions arrangements (Appendix 1).
- All adjoining neighbouring local authorities were consulted.
- A questionnaire available on-line and in paper form (on request), with the additional option to contact the team to discuss.
- Invitations to submit a written response.

The consultation was widely promoted and had the potential to reach a significant number of stakeholders, given that over 50,000 children attend schools in Hillingdon.

Consultation Responses

4 responses were received in total during the consultation period with all being submitted via the online questionnaire. The responses are summarised below.

Online Questionnaire responses are summarised below:

1. **2** respondents agreed with the proposal to reduce the Published Admissions Number of Field End Infant School from 90 (three-form entry) to 60 (two-form entry), effective from the September 2027 academic year.
 - Yes – 2
 - No – 2
 - Don't know - 0
2. Of the **2** respondents that answered 'No' or 'Don't know', reasons have been summarised below in the paper
3. **1** respondent did not agree that the proposed changes would disadvantage any Hillingdon residents.
 - Yes – 2
 - No – 1
 - Don't know – 1
4. Of the **2** respondents that agreed the changes will disadvantage Hillingdon residents, reasons have been summarised below in the paper.
5. **4** respondents have confirmed their interest in the proposal as:
 - A parent/carer/guardian - 2
 - A Local resident – 2
6. **4** respondents confirmed the number of children under the age of 18 living in their household:
 - None – 1
 - 1 – 1
 - 2 – 1
 - 3 - 0
 - 4 – 1
7. Respondents were invited to state which school(s) their child(ren) currently attend, and the responses were as follows:
 - Field End Infant School - 1

- Field End Junior School - 0
- Other Primary School in Hillingdon - 1
- Other Secondary School in Hillingdon - 1
- N/A - 1

8. 1 provided additional comment(s) on the proposals which are summarised below:

Some respondents expressed concern that reducing the distance priority radius from 1,000 metres to 750 metres could restrict children's access to high-quality education. The Local Authority do not feel there will be any material difference in admissions as a result of the reduction in distance criteria, as local children will still be able to request a place at the school, and there are forecast to still be more than sufficient places available after the PAN reduction.

The proposed reduction in PAN is driven by current and projected demand to ensure resources are used efficiently. Importantly, the school's physical capacity remains unchanged, allowing additional places to be reinstated in the future if there are substantial increases in birth rates or population growth. This will depend on local circumstances at the time of any request or increase in demand.

Conclusion

Reducing the PAN at Field End Infant School will give the school greater flexibility to manage its resources effectively whilst continuing to deliver high-quality education for the local community. The Local Authority will continue to monitor demographic trends and, if demand increases in the future, additional places can be reinstated at the school.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications are centred around staffing. The school is working with their commissioned HR provider to review the staff structure to reflect the PAN reduction. This will help in future planning to help reduce the financial pressure on the school and the risk of the school running into deficit. The spare physical space can be used in future if rolls rise in the relevant areas and will be used by the school as required meanwhile.

It is important that the Committee considers cost effective proposals that benefit resident taxpayers in relation to this review, which would ultimately be determined by Cabinet as part of the Council's broader budget planning process.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Background paper 1](#) - School Admissions Code 2021

[Background paper 2](#) - Cabinet Decision PAN reduction of Field End Infant School (Thursday 17 February 2022)

[Background paper 3](#) - London Borough of Hillingdon: School Organisation Plan 2025-26

APPENDIX

Appendix 1 – Proposed Community School Admissions Arrangements 2027-2028



Proposed London Borough of Hillingdon Community Schools
Determined Admission Arrangements 2027-2028

CONTENTS

Page 2	Admissions criteria and arrangements for community schools
Page 10	Admission arrangements for In-Year, Junior, and Nursery
Page 13	Definitions and additional processes
Page 21	Appendices (change on page 21)

ADMISSION CRITERIA AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR HILLINGDON LOCAL AUTHORITY COMMUNITY INFANT, JUNIOR, AND PRIMARY SCHOOLS

(except for Frithwood Primary School, Harmondsworth Primary School, and Heathrow Primary School which are set out separately)

When the school is oversubscribed, after the admission of pupils with an Education, Health & Care Plan where the school is named in the Plan, priority for admission will be given to those children who meet the criteria set out below:

1. A looked after child (as defined in the Children Act 1989) or a child who was previously looked after but immediately after being looked after became subject to an adoption, child arrangements, or special guardianship order including those who appear [to the admission authority] to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted.

2. Children attending year 2 at the linked infant school are given priority for admission to the junior school (this applies to junior school applications only).

3. Children who suffer from a long term medical or social condition, which makes it necessary for them to attend a particular school.

4. Children who have a member of the immediate family who suffer from a long term medical or social condition which makes it necessary for them to attend a particular school.

5. Children who have a sibling* living within the distance priority radius.

6. Children of staff where the member of staff is recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage.

7. Children living nearest the school within the distance priority radius.

8. Children who have a sibling* living outside of the distance priority radius.

9. Children living nearest the school not within the distance priority radius.

Priority will be given within each criterion for those living nearest the school according to distance which will be measured in a straight line from the point set by Ordnance Survey at the child's home address and the school using Hillingdon Council's computerised mapping system.

The supporting evidence in Criteria 3 and 4 above should set out the particular reasons why the school in question is the most suitable and the difficulties that would be caused if the child had to attend another school. The admission authority cannot give higher priority to children under these criteria if the required documents have not been produced. Applications must be supported by medical evidence from a GP or Hospital Consultant. Please refer to page 12 for full information on the medical criteria.

* For the purposes of criteria 5, 6 and 9, a sibling is defined as a brother or sister, half brother or sister with at least one parent in common, adopted brother or sister living in the same household who currently attends the full-time school (not the nursery)

and will continue to do so on the date of admission. Linked infant and junior schools are considered to be the same school for these criteria.

The distance priority radius for each school will be set as follows.

1 form entry school = 500 metres

2 form entry school = 750 metres

3 form entry school = 1000 metres

4 form entry school = 1250 metres

5 form entry school = 1500 metres - (currently no community schools have a full intake of 5 forms of entry, but this provision is included in the arrangements to future proof against rising demand for primary school places)

ADMISSION CRITERIA AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR FRITHWOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL

When the school is oversubscribed, after the admission of pupils with an Education, Health & Care Plan where the school is named in the Plan, priority for admission will be given to those children who meet the criteria set out below:

1. A looked after child (as defined in the Children Act 1989) or a child who was previously looked after but immediately after being looked after became subject to an adoption, child arrangements, or special guardianship order including those who appear [to the admission authority] to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted.
2. 5 places will be made available to children living nearest the nodal point using the co-ordinates 5081120, 1912400 (junction of Ducks Hill Road and Northgate) and who live within the defined boundary area shown in the map in Appendix 2. If fewer than 5 places are offered the remaining places will be offered to applicants meeting criteria 3 or below.
The remaining places will be allocated in order of the following priority:
3. Children who suffer from a long term medical or social condition, which makes it necessary for them to attend a particular school.
4. Children who have a member of the immediate family who suffer from a long term medical or social condition which makes it necessary for them to attend a particular school.
5. Children who have a sibling* living within the distance priority radius.
6. Children of staff where the member of staff is recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage.
7. Children living nearest the school within the distance priority radius.
8. Children who have a sibling* living outside of the distance priority radius.
9. Children living nearest the school not within the distance priority radius.
<p>Priority will be given within each criterion for those living nearest the school according to distance which will be measured in a straight line from the point set by Ordnance Survey at the child's home address and the school using Hillingdon Council's computerised mapping system.</p> <p>The supporting evidence in Criteria 3 and 4 above should set out the particular reasons why the school in question is the most suitable and the difficulties that would be caused if the child had to attend another school. The admission authority cannot give higher priority to children under these criteria if the required documents have not been produced. Applications must be supported by medical evidence from a GP or Hospital Consultant. Please refer to page 12 for full information on the medical criteria.</p> <p>* For the purposes of criteria 5, 6 and 9, a sibling is defined as a brother or sister, half brother or sister with at least one parent in common, adopted brother or sister living in the same household who currently attends the full-time school (not the nursery) and will continue to do so on the date of admission.</p>

The nodal point used in criteria 2 will give priority to applicants living in an area where it is traditionally more difficult to secure a place at a nearby school.

The distance priority radius for each school will be set as follows.

1 form entry school = 500 metres

2 form entry school = 750 metres

3 form entry school = 1000 metres

4 form entry school = 1250 metres

5 form entry school = 1500 metres - (currently no community schools have a full intake of 5 forms of entry, but this provision is included in the arrangements to future proof against rising demand for primary school places)

ADMISSION CRITERIA AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR HARMONDSWORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

When the school is oversubscribed, after the admission of pupils with an Education, Health & Care Plan where the school is named in the Plan, priority for admission will be given to those children who meet the criteria set out below:

1. A looked after child (as defined in the Children Act 1989) or a child who was previously looked after but immediately after being looked after became subject to an adoption, child arrangements, or special guardianship order including those who appear [to the admission authority] to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted.
2. Children who suffer from a long term medical or social condition, which makes it necessary for them to attend a particular school.
3. Children who have a member of the immediate family who suffer from a long term medical or social condition which makes it necessary for them to attend a particular school.
4. Children who have a sibling* living within the defined boundary area (identified below).
5. Children of staff where the member of staff is recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage. (Does not apply if applying for Infant School and parent is a member of staff in the Junior School).
6. Children living nearest the school within the defined boundary area (identified below).
7. Children who have a sibling* living outside of the defined boundary area (identified below).
8. Children living outside of the defined boundary area (identified below).
<p>Priority will be given within each criterion for those living nearest the school according to distance which will be measured in a straight line from the point set by Ordnance Survey at the child's home address and the school using Hillingdon Council's computerised mapping system.</p> <p>The supporting evidence in Criteria 2 and 3 above should set out the particular reasons why the school in question is the most suitable and the difficulties that would be caused if the child had to attend another school. The admission authority cannot give higher priority to children under these criteria if the required documents have not been produced. Applications must be supported by medical evidence from a GP or Hospital Consultant. Please refer to page 12 for full information on the medical criteria.</p> <p>* For the purposes of criteria 4, 5 and 8, a sibling is defined as a brother or sister, half brother or sister with at least one parent in common, adopted brother or sister living in the same household who currently attends the full-time school (not the nursery) and will continue to do so on the date of admission.</p> <p>The defined boundary area for Harmondsworth Primary School includes all residential properties satisfying the 5 conditions below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The M4 is to the North

- The M25 is to the West
- The M4 Spur is to the East
- The Bath Road is to the South and Northern Perimeter Road are to the South.
- The property does not fall within the defined boundary area for Heathrow Primary School.

A map showing the defined boundary area for Harmondsworth Primary School can be found in Appendix 3.

ADMISSION CRITERIA AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR HEATHROW PRIMARY SCHOOL

When the school is oversubscribed, after the admission of pupils with an Education, Health & Care Plan where the school is named in the Plan, priority for admission will be given to those children who meet the criteria set out below:

1. A looked after child (as defined in the Children Act 1989) or a child who was previously looked after but immediately after being looked after became subject to an adoption, child arrangements, or special guardianship order including those who appear [to the admission authority] to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted.
2. Children who suffer from a long term medical or social condition, which makes it necessary for them to attend a particular school.
3. Children who have a member of the immediate family who suffer from a long term medical or social condition which makes it necessary for them to attend a particular school.
4. Children who have a sibling* living within the defined boundary area (identified below).
5. Children of staff where the member of staff is recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage.
6. Children living nearest the school within the defined boundary area (identified below).
7. Children who have a sibling* living outside of the defined boundary area (identified below).
8. Children living outside of the defined boundary area (identified below).
<p>Priority will be given within each criterion for those living nearest the school according to distance which will be measured in a straight line from the point set by Ordnance Survey at the child's home address and the school using Hillingdon Council's computerised mapping system.</p> <p>The supporting evidence in Criteria 2 and 3 above should set out the particular reasons why the school in question is the most suitable and the difficulties that would be caused if the child had to attend another school. The admission authority cannot give higher priority to children under these criteria if the required documents have not been produced. Applications must be supported by medical evidence from a GP or Hospital Consultant. Please refer to page 12 for full information on the medical criteria.</p> <p>* For the purposes of criteria 4, 5 and 8, a sibling is defined as a brother or sister, half brother or sister with at least one parent in common, adopted brother or sister living in the same household who currently attends the full-time school (not the nursery) and will continue to do so on the date of admission.</p> <p>The defined boundary area for Heathrow Primary School includes residential properties located on the roads listed below. Ashby Way Blunts Avenue Bomer Close</p>

Chitterfield Gate
Harmondsworth Lane 2 to 46 & 1 to 59
Hollycroft Close
Hollycroft Gardens
Kenwood Close
Russell Gardens
Sipson Close
Sipson Lane (from Sipson Road to M4 Spur)
Sipson Road 1-10 Copsewood Court
Sipson Road 239 to 501 & 356 to 544
Sipson Way
Vincent Close
Vineries Close
Wykeham Close

A map showing the defined boundary area for Heathrow Primary School can be found in Appendix 4.

ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR IN YEAR, JUNIOR, AND NURSERY ADMISSIONS TO SCHOOL

EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND CARE PLAN

Children with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) will be placed under the latest Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) regulations. Children with an EHCP that names a school will be allocated a place before other children are considered. In this way, the number of places available will be reduced by the number of children with an EHCP that has named the school. Placements in special schools and special resource units located in Hillingdon are determined outside of these arrangements using the London Borough of Hillingdon SEND published protocols.

IN YEAR ADMISSIONS

The following applications will be treated as in-year admissions during 2027/28:

- applications for admission to Reception which are received after 1 September 2027;
- for any school which has a published admission number (PAN) for Year 3, applications for admission to Year 3 which are received after 1 September 2027;
- applications for admission to Year 7 which are received after 1 September 2027;
- all other applications for admission to Years 1 to 6 and 8 to 11

Parents must apply directly to the admission authority for a community school or schools of their preference. The Local Authority is the admission authority for Community Schools. Academies, Voluntary Aided Schools, Foundation Schools, Free Schools are their own admission authorities. Parents can either apply directly to the non-community schools or through the Local Authority.

The relevant admission authority will make available a suitable form on which an application may be made. The Local Authority will make available a suitable form for parents to complete when applying for a place at any school for which they are not the admission authority as required.

Every admission authority is required to notify the Local Authority of both the application and the outcome of the application so that the Local Authority can meet its statutory duty to keep up to date figures on the availability of school places in the area.

Admission authorities must inform parents of their right of appeal against refusal of a place.

ADMISSION TO A JUNIOR SCHOOL FOR A PLACE IN YEAR 3

In accordance with the co-ordination of junior school places, parents can complete a common application form naming up to 6 preferences for a junior school.

Priority is given to pupils already attending year 2 in an infant school for admission to the linked junior school. In Hillingdon, infant and junior schools are linked where they share the same name.

Hillingdon residents with children attending year 2 in an infant School in Hillingdon must apply to continue their education at any junior school by completing the application form available from LB Hillingdon and online.

Hillingdon residents with children attending year 2 in an infant School not in Hillingdon will need to complete a Hillingdon application form. Details of the application will be forwarded to the maintaining local authority.

Residents whose children attend year 2 in an infant School in Hillingdon but do not live in Hillingdon will need to submit an application through their own local authority in order to be considered for a year 3 place in a Hillingdon junior school.

Any resident wishing to transfer from an infant school to a primary school at the start of year 3 should complete an In-Year application.

NURSERY ADMISSIONS

The local authority has delegated the admissions of nursery children to the governing body of community schools/nurseries. Applicants wishing to apply for a place must complete the application form and submit it directly to the school or nursery that they wish to apply for, in accordance with the dates set by the school.

Each nursery class within community infant and primary schools will either operate one or two part-time sessions of up to 3 hours a day or may also operate full-time provision for children of parents who meet the criteria for an offer of a full-time nursery place for children of working parents, depending on the school. This means that children might normally attend in the morning or afternoon, although if the school is offering the place more flexibly this could be over a longer period. Children attending a nursery in a community infant or primary school would normally either attend for 5 morning or 5 afternoon sessions per week. If the school is offering full-time nursery provision for working parents (as defined by government guidelines), children would normally attend both morning and afternoon sessions, 5 days per week. Further information about individual nursery arrangements can be sought from the nursery school direct.

Attendance at a nursery is not typically considered when allocating places for full-time school. This is because nursery admissions are managed independently by schools and are not regulated or coordinated by the local authority. Prioritising children who attend a school's nursery could disadvantage families who live closer to the school but chose alternative childcare options, such as a private nursery or decided not to send their child to nursery at all.

LOOKED AFTER AND PREVIOUSLY LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Within the admission arrangements for all community schools looked after and previously looked after children will receive the top priority for a place. Looked after and previously looked after children will be considered to be:

- children who are registered as being in the care of a local authority or provided with accommodation by a local authority in accordance with Section 22 of the Children Act 1989(a), e.g. fostered or living in a children's home, at the time an application for a school is made.
- children who have previously been in the care of a local authority or provided with accommodation by a local authority in accordance with Section 22 of the Children Act 1989(a) and who have left that care through adoption, a child arrangements order (in accordance with Section 8 of the Children Act 1989 and as amended by the Children and Families Act 2014) or special guardianship order (in accordance with Section 14A of the Children Act 1989) and;
- Children who have been in state care outside of England if they were in the care of or were accommodated by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other provider of care whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society. This includes children who were adopted under the Adoption Act 1976 (in accordance with Section 12 adoption orders) and children who were adopted under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (in accordance with Section 46 adoption orders).

Places will be allocated under this criterion when places are first offered at a school. In addition, the local authority may also ask schools to admit over their published admission number at other times under this criterion.

DEFINITIONS AND ADDITIONAL PROCESSES

MEDICAL/SOCIAL APPLICATIONS

All community school admission arrangements include a medical/social criterion, which may give priority in **exceptional circumstances** to children (or their immediate family members) with long-term medical conditions or significant social needs. This applies where it can be clearly demonstrated that placing the child in a school other than the one preferred by the parent/carer would result in substantial difficulties that cannot be overcome through reasonable adjustments.

Medical applications are assessed individually and typically apply where a child must attend their nearest or most suitable school due to mobility concerns, or where a school offers unique resources for a specific medical condition not available elsewhere. However, all our primary schools are equipped to support long-term medical conditions that do not require an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP).

Social applications must demonstrate exceptional need, supported by evidence from professionals such as social workers. Consideration will also be given to the circumstances of parents or carers where this impacts the child's wellbeing.

Applications under either criterion must include detailed evidence at the time of application. This should come from relevant professionals, such as a GP, hospital consultant, social worker, or health visitor and must clearly explain why a place is required at a specific school and the difficulties that would arise if the child were to attend another school.

Providing evidence does not guarantee priority. Each application is considered on its individual merits, and decisions are based on whether the evidence justifies placement at the named school over another school.

Medical/social applications are reviewed and decided by officers from the School Placement and Admissions team. Where necessary, further clarification may be sought from other professionals or relevant teams to support the decision-making process.

WAITING LISTS

Waiting lists for Community Schools are maintained by the LA in accordance with the published admission criteria. Children's names will be added to the list at the request of a parent (in the case of in year applications) and places will be offered throughout the year as vacancies arise. Children may move down the waiting list if another family applies, with a higher priority under the admission criteria.

In the case of a new reception application, the child's name will automatically be placed on the waiting list for Hillingdon Community schools which were a higher preference than the offer made. Parents who wish their child to be added to the waiting list of a lower preference must reapply for a place at that school. Waiting lists are not compiled on a first come first served basis and so time on the list does not give any priority. A child's position on the waiting lists will be held for the academic year in which they apply.

Waiting lists for community schools will be maintained until the last day of the Summer term 2026 when they will be cancelled. Parents will be prompted to re-register their interest with the School Placement and Admissions Team should they wish to remain on a waiting list for future academic years.

DISTANCE CRITERION

Distance is measured in a straight line from the child's home address (as defined below) to the school, using a Graphical Information System (GIS) which is based on Ordnance Survey data. The measurement is from the address point for the home address to the agreed address point for the school. The grid reference address points for community schools can be found in Appendix 1.

Distance is also used to determine priority within each criterion where there is more than one applicant who meets that criterion.

TIE BREAKER

Where two or more children share a priority for a place, e.g. where two children live equidistant from a community school and only one place remains, Hillingdon Council will use a computerised random allocation to determine which child should be given priority.

Where the child lives in a block of flats with a communal entrance the centre point used is the central point of the block of flats (as defined by Ordnance Survey) and not the individual flat. If children are tied for the final place(s) to be allocated within a single block of flats, priority for the final place(s) will be determined by random allocation (as described above).

HOME ADDRESS

The address you provide must be your child's permanent address at the time/close of application. You must not use a business address, childminders or relative's address, or any address other than your home address. Only in circumstances where the relative or carer has legal guardianship, and is the main carer, will a different address be considered as the main residence. Evidence will be requested to support this arrangement.

SHARED OR JOINT RESIDENCY

Where a child lives with parents with shared parental responsibility, each for part of a week, the address where the child lives is determined using a joint declaration from the parents stating the pattern of residence. The declaration (including the addresses of both parents) must be submitted at the time of making the original application.

If no joint declaration is received by the closing date for applications and the residence is split equally, Hillingdon will consider the address of the parent who is in receipt of Child Benefit or if Child Benefit is not being received, the address at which the child is registered with a doctor (GP.). You must send us a copy of your latest benefit entitlement notice or your child's medical card. We may also ask for further evidence if required.

Any offer of a place based on address is conditional upon the child living at the appropriate address on the relevant date. Applicants have a responsibility to notify Hillingdon Council of any change of address.

TEMPORARY ADDRESSES

A temporary address may not be accepted if you still own a property that was previously used as a home address, or a temporary address which the Admissions Authority consider to be solely or mainly used to obtain a school place. If you own more than one property the Admissions Authority may only consider the given address if you have lived there for a year prior to the closing date of application (including rented, bought, or living with a family member or friend).

You will be asked to provide additional information to explain why you are not using your permanent address, or another address identified as a result of our screening, or as a result of information obtained from the public. This may include utility bills, benefit claims and copies of

mortgage or rent agreements. We will also check Hillingdon council records as well as other Local Authorities records to clarify whether or not you receive services or benefits at another address.

EVIDENCE/PROOF OF ADDRESS

You need to provide documentary evidence of address by including your Council Tax reference number (as shown on your annual bill or direct debit statement). If it is not possible to verify your address by this method, or further evidence is required, you will be contacted. In these cases, we will request that you provide one or more of the following documents:

- A mortgage/tenancy agreement document
- A recent letter from the housing department/housing association
- Temporary housing letter issued by Local Authority, Home Office, UK Border Agency
- Recent utility bill (dated within the last three months)
- Driving license (copy of your current driving licence)
- Household/car Insurance; A copy of your most recent household/car insurance (dated within the last 12 months)
- Home Office immigration status document
- Letter confirming entitlement to benefits. For example, housing, income support, jobseekers (dated within the last three months)
- Child Benefit / Inland Revenue documents (if you are in receipt of either or both of these benefits); or
- Any other recently dated documents that we request depending on individual cases.

Please note that you can cover/erase any financial/personal information on these documents. The purpose of this document is to provide evidence of your address therefore we only require this to show your name, address, and date of issue.

You must notify the School Placement and Admissions team if you move address. Your new address will not be updated until proof has been provided.

Any proof of address provided must show the full name and match the details provided at the time of application.

TIE BREAKER

Where two or more children share a priority for a place, e.g. where two children live equidistant from a community school and only one place remains, Hillingdon Council will use a computerised random allocation to determine which child should be given priority.

Where the child lives in a block of flats with a communal entrance the centre point used is the central point of the block of flats (as defined by Ordnance Survey) and not the individual flat. If children are tied for the final place(s) to be allocated within a single block of flats, priority for the final place(s) will be determined by random allocation (as described above).

WITHDRAWAL OF PLACES

Places offered at oversubscribed school will be withdrawn if:

- the offer was made in error.
- an incorrect address or other false information is supplied.
- parent has not responded to an offer within a reasonable time. A further letter will be sent to advise parent that failure to respond will result in the place being withdrawn.

A place will not be withdrawn once a child has started at the school, except where that place was fraudulently obtained but the length of time the child has been at the school will be taken into account i.e., less than one term.

SIBLINGS

A sibling means a child's brother or sister, stepbrother, or stepsister, with at least one parent in common, and/or an adopted brother or sister living in the same household. Cousins or other family members (even if living in the same household) do not qualify as a sibling. To qualify for the sibling criterion, the sibling must be attending the school named at the time of admission. If the sibling is already in year 6 and, come September, when the applicant will be starting the school, the sibling will no longer be attending, the sibling criterion may not be met.

MULTIPLE BIRTHS

Twins and children from multiple births when one of the siblings is the last child to be admitted at a community school will be offered over the published admission number unless to do so would prejudice the provision of efficient education or the efficient use of resources. In such cases, Hillingdon Council will use a computerised random allocation to determine which child should be given priority. Where it is not possible to offer each child a place the child(ren) ranked the highest will retain their offer and the applicant will be advised of their right of appeal and informed about waiting lists. For Key Stage 1 the child/children will be considered as an exception to the class size rule.

CHILD OF STAFF

Priority will be given to a child if their parent is a permanent member of staff at the school and meets either or both of the following circumstances: a) the member of staff has been employed at the school for two or more years at the time at which the application for admission to the school is made; and/or b) the member of staff is recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage. For applications made as part of a normal intake, the length of employment will be considered as of the closing date for applications. Many non-community schools have a criterion for children of staff/teaching staff. If you work at a school for which you are applying, please indicate this, and include the name of the school where you work on the application. Please check full definitions on individual school's published admission arrangements – available on their websites.

CHILDREN OF UK SERVICE PERSONNEL

Children of service personnel will not be disadvantaged in the admissions process as stated in the School Admissions Code 2021. For those families with a confirmed posting to this area, places will be allocated in advance of the family arriving in the area. The application must be accompanied by an official letter that declares a relocation date and a Unit postal address.

CHILDREN OF CROWN SERVANTS

The School Admissions Code requires that for families of Crown servants returning from overseas to live in that area, admission authorities must allocate a school place in advance of the family arriving in the area, provided their application is accompanied by an official letter declaring a relocation date.

Confirmation of relocation address

It is important that parents are able to provide admission authorities with some certainty as to their relocation address, in order to ensure that places are allocated fairly and in accordance with each school's admissions criteria.

Where a parent is unable to provide any confirmation of a relocation address, they are advised to provide an indication of area, narrowed down as far as possible, to which the family intend to return.

Parents should keep admission authorities informed of any changes to their planned address during the application process and should note that without being able to provide any confirmation of a relocation address, an admission authority may not be able to process their application. For the purpose of starting primary/secondary the application must be submitted by the deadline.

APPLICATIONS FROM ABROAD

If your child holds a full British Citizen passport that is endorsed to show a right of abode in the UK, an application could be accepted, even though they are not resident here yet. For the purpose of allocation, the abroad address must be used to process the application. This does not apply to Crown Servants and UK Service Personnel.

Evidence will be required to provide a link to an address in the London Borough of Hillingdon when the application is submitted. Evidence might include:

- Booked flights
- End of lease /notice to tenants in property
- Start of employment contract in area
- End of employment contract abroad

If this evidence cannot be provided the application may not be processed.

APPLICATIONS FOR FAMILIES ARRIVING FROM ABROAD. INCLUDING FROM THE EU, FROM 1 JANUARY 2021

In most cases, children arriving from overseas have the right to attend schools in England. It is the responsibility of parents to check that their children have a right, under their visa entry conditions, to study at a school before submitting an application.

[Read more on the government website](#)

FAIR ACCESS

Local authorities use the Fair Access Protocol to place pupils applying for an in-year school place in schools where the child is hard to place, for example where there are no vacancies at a school within a reasonable distance or where there are behaviour concerns. Please see the London Borough of Hillingdon's website for the Fair Access Protocol.

The Protocol will not apply to a looked after child, or a child with an Education, Health and Care Plan naming the school in question, as these children must be admitted.

REQUESTS FOR ADMISSION TO SCHOOL OUTSIDE A CHILD'S AGE GROUP

Children are educated in school with others of their age group. However, parents may request that their child is exceptionally admitted outside their age group. The Admission Authority of a school must decide whether or not the individual child's circumstances make this appropriate on educational grounds. Such requests will only be agreed in exceptional circumstances.

Summer born

Parents of summer born children (those born between 1 April and 31 August) can request for their child to be admitted to reception a year later outside of their chronological year group, thereby starting school in Reception only once they reach statutory school age. This does not apply to children

born in the autumn and spring as these children must legally be in school full time in the term after their fifth birthday.

Parents requesting admission to an age group below the child's actual age should submit an application for the child's actual age group before the closing date of allocation. The request for later admission should accompany the application. This enables the application to be processed, and a school place secured in the child's actual age group if an Admission Authority refuses the request. If the Admission Authority approves the request, the parent will be advised to re-apply in the following year and provide a copy of the decision. However, there can be no guarantee of a place being available at the school, as this is dependent on the number of applicants that year. It is not possible to reserve a place for the following year. Parents are therefore advised to have alternative arrangements in place.

Any decision is applicable only to the school for which the Admission Authority is responsible.

How to apply

- When a parent feels their child should be educated in a higher chronological age group, parents will need to apply for admission the year before the child would normally apply for school.
- Or when a parent would like their child educated in a lower chronological age group, parents would need to apply as part of the normal admissions round for a school, they should initially apply for a school place by 15 January in the year of the chronological cohort.
- In both instances, parents should put forward their request for their child to be educated out of their chronological year group along with any supporting evidence that they may have. They can complete the 'out of cohort request application' available on our web page.

Whilst there is no expectation for parents to obtain professional evidence that they do not already have, it may be useful to demonstrate why it would be in the child's best interests to be admitted out of their chronological year group.

This process will ensure that an in-principle decision can be made in good time, and that the child does not miss out on accessing a year of education should the request to educate out of the chronological year be refused. However, any offer of a place in a child's correct chronological year group cannot be held until the following academic year.

As such, if an admission authority agrees in principle that an out of year group placement would be appropriate, the parent would have to apply again in the following year in order for their child's application to be considered according to the admission criteria for that school alongside other applicants in that year. In addition, one admission authority cannot be required to honour a decision made by another admission authority. Parents should therefore consider whether to request admission out of the normal year group at all their preference schools rather than just their first preference.

Where requests are received the decision will be made according to the circumstances of the case and what is in the best interest of the child. In each case, the decision will be made by the admission authority for the school, taking into consideration the following;

- Parent's views
- Head teacher's views
- Information about child's academic, social, and emotional development
- Relevant medical history and views of a medical professional
- Previous experience of education outside of the child's normal age group
- Premature children who would be in a lower age group if not born prematurely.

DEFERRED ADMISSION

In Hillingdon, children can start school in the September immediately following the child's fourth birthday. Parents can request that the date their child is admitted to school is deferred until later in the year or until the child is statutory school age and can request that their child takes up the place part-time until this time.

Parents should discuss all the options with the Headteacher of the school taking into account their views of a child's maturity and readiness to enter reception class.

APPEALS

Where a place cannot be offered parents/applicants have the right of appeal under the School Standards & Framework Act 1998 against the refusal of a place at any of the schools for which they have applied.

Hillingdon Council is the admission authority for all community primary schools in Hillingdon and is responsible for arranging and hosting the appeal hearings for these schools. The timetable for organising and hearing community school appeals is as follows:

Year of entry	Appeals can be submitted	Appeal to be heard
Reception starting September 2027 (on-time application)	From 16 April 2027 - 17 May 2027	Will be heard within 40 school days of the deadline for lodging appeals. Will be heard before the end of the summer term 2026.
Year 3 starting September 2027 (on-time application)	From 16 April 2027 - 17 May 2027	Will be heard within 40 school days of the deadline for lodging appeals. Will be heard before the end of the summer term 2026.
Reception starting September 2027 (late application)	From 16 April 2027 - 31 August 2027	Will be heard within 40 school days from the deadline for lodging appeals where possible, or within 30 school days of the appeal being lodged. No guarantee that the appeal hearing will be arranged before the end of the summer term.
Year 3 starting September 2027 (late application)	From 16 April 2027 - 31 August 2027	Will be heard within 40 school days from the deadline for lodging appeals where possible, or within 30 school days of the appeal being lodged. No guarantee that the appeal hearing will be arranged before the end of the summer term.
In year applications September 2027 - July 2028	Throughout the academic year	Will be heard within 30 school days of the appeal being lodged.

Once an appeal has been lodged, appellants will receive at least 10 school days' notice of their appeal hearing date.

Appeal papers will be sent to all parties at least 5 school days prior to the appeal hearing.

Parents/applicants can submit additional evidence prior to the appeal hearing; however, this should be submitted to the local authority at least 5 school days prior to the appeal hearing for the additional information to be considered.

RELEVANT AREA

The Relevant Area for the local authority is the whole of the borough of Hillingdon. This is the area in which admission authorities must consult with schools regarding their proposed admission arrangements before finalising them. The Education (Relevant Areas for Consultation on Admission Arrangements) Regulations 1999 requires the Local Authority to consult on and review its Relevant Area every two years.

CONSULTATION/DETERMINATION

Each year, the Local Authority is required to draw up, consult on and determine:

Co-ordinated admission arrangements (schemes) for all schools in the Local Authority area for entry at the normal time of admission (Year R for Infant and Primary schools, Year 3 for Junior schools, Year 7 for Secondary schools and Year 10 for UTC's and Studio colleges). This can be

found as a separate document (Hillingdon's Scheme of Coordination) on our website [Admission arrangements for Hillingdon community schools - Hillingdon Council](#)

APPENDIX 1

Primary School Admission Numbers for 2027/28

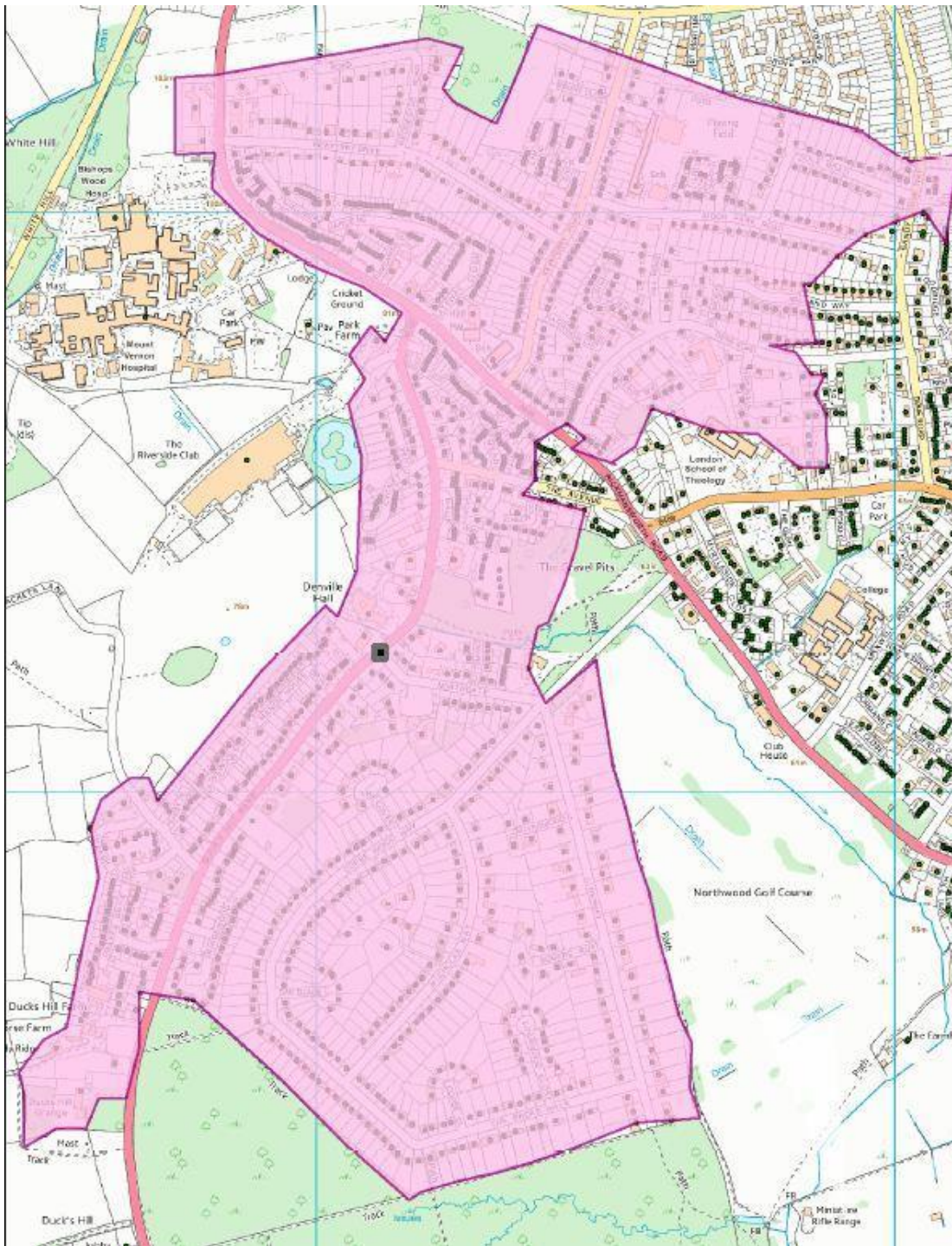
Name of School	Proposed Admission 2027/28	Distance Priority Radius	OS Distance measurement point	
			Easting	Northing
Belmore Primary	90 *			
Bishop Winnington Ingram CE Primary	30 *			
Botwell House Catholic Primary	90 *			
Bourne Primary	30	500m	5113470	1849230
The Breakspear	90	1000m	5073990	1867900
Brookside Primary	60 *			
Charville Primary	90 *			
Cherry Lane Primary	90	1000m	5069400	1787040
Colham Manor Primary	90	1000m	5070710	1814570
Coteford Junior	81 *			
Coteford Infant	60	750m	5101860	1884560
Cowley St Laurence CE School	60 *			
Cranford Park Primary	120 *			
Deanesfield Primary	90	1000m	5117330	1857160
Dr Triplett's CE Primary	60 *			
Field End Junior	90 *			
Field End Infant	60	750m	5116800	1864470
Frithwood Primary	60	750m	5097090	1917030
Glebe Primary	90	1000m	5084910	1856020
Grange Park School	90 *			
Guru Nanak Sikh Academy	60 *			
Harefield Primary (name tbc)	60	750m	5051120	1905470
Harlyn Primary	60	750m	5107530	1898450
Harmondsworth Primary	30	Boundary	5056554	1775246
Hayes Park School	90 *			
Heathrow Primary	60	Boundary	5069880	1779160
Hermitage Primary	60 *	750m	5059090	1844990
Hewens Primary	60 *			
Highfield Primary	60	750m	5079410	1828860
Hillingdon Primary	90 *			
Hillside Junior	90 *			
Hillside Infant	60 *			
Holy Trinity CE Primary	30 *			
John Locke	90 *			
Lady Bankes Primary	90	1000m	5104530	1869190
Lake Farm Park	90 *			
Laurel Lane Primary	60 *			
Minet Junior	120	1250m	5105625	1803597
Minet Infant	120	1250m	5105625	1803597
Nanaksar Primary	120 *			
Newnham Junior	90	1000m	5114410	1874320
Newnham Infant	90	1000m	5114410	1874320
Oak Farm Primary	60 *			

Pinkwell Primary	90	*			
Rabbsfarm Primary	90		1000m	5060502	1809622
Rosedale College	60	*			
Ruislip Gardens Primary	60		750m	5095590	1859390
Ryefield Primary	60	*			
Sacred Heart Catholic Primary	90	*			
St Andrew's CE Primary	30	*			
St Bernadette's Primary	60	*			
St Catherine's Catholic Primary	30	*			
St Mary's Catholic Primary	30	*			
St Martin's CE Primary	60	*			
St Matthew's CE Primary	60	*			
St Swithun Wells Catholic Primary	30	*			
Warrender Primary	60		750m	5099640	1876864
West Drayton Primary	90	*	1000m		
Whitehall Junior	90		1000m	5054670	1834820
Whitehall Infant	90		1000m	5054340	1835300
Whiteheath Junior	90		1000m	5082480	1879920
Whiteheath Infant	90		1000m	5081150	1880740
William Byrd Primary	90	*			
Wood End Park Community	120	*			
Yeading Junior	128		1250m	5111150	1815950
Yeading Infant	120		1250m	5112070	1815330

* These schools are their own admission authority. Any changes to their admission arrangements will be consulted on separately.

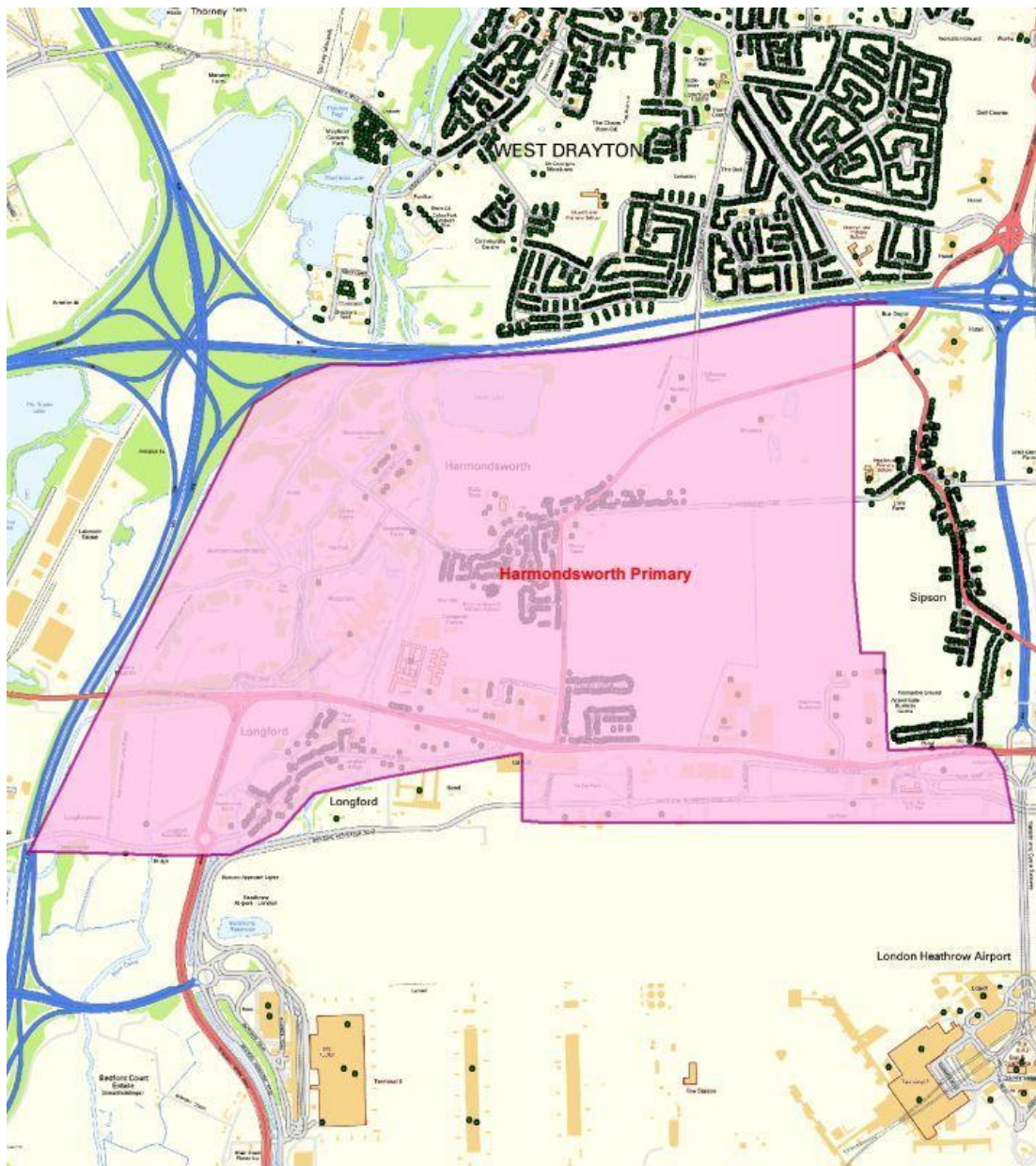
Some Hillingdon primary schools may also apply for a variation to their Published Admission Number for September 2027.

Frithwood Primary School



APPENDIX 3: Defined Boundary Area map

Harmondsworth Primary School



APPENDIX 4: Defined Boundary Area map

Heathrow Primary School



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LOWERING THE AGE RANGE OF WHITEHEATH INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOL

Committee name	Children, Families & Education Select Committee
Officer reporting	Kathryn Angelini, Assistant Director for Education
Papers with report	Consultation responses
Ward	Ruislip

HEADLINES

The proposal is to change the age range of Whiteheath Infant and Nursery School from 3-11 to 2-11, so they can provide places for eligible two-year-old children. This change would take effect at the school no later than September 2026. The governing body of the school has agreed for this proposal to be made.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee note the proposal and consultation taken place; and submit any comments to Cabinet, who will consider this at their meeting on 15 January 2026.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Early years entitlements for two-year-olds

From the term after their second birthday, children can access up to 15 hours of funded childcare, if they meet the following criteria:

- Are receiving an eligible benefit eg Income Support, Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance

Or

- Are looked after by a local authority
- Have an Education, Health and Care Plan
- Get Disability Living Allowance
- Have left care under an adoption order, special guardianship order or a child arrangements order

Full eligibility criteria can be found [here](#). This is referred to as the Families Receiving Additional Support (FRAS) eligibility criteria.

From April 2024, the 'working families' entitlement was also introduced which further expanded the number of two-year-olds who are eligible for funded childcare.

The Department for Education projected that, following the expansion of eligibility for funded childcare from April 2024, an additional 955 two-year-old children in Hillingdon would access

funded hours each term. In practice, demand has exceeded these estimates: in Hillingdon, 1,121 additional two-year-olds accessed funded hours during the Autumn term 2025 alone. This demonstrates a significantly higher uptake than anticipated and highlights the pressing need to increase local capacity for early years provision.

Overall, the local childcare market has been able to meet demand for places under the working families entitlement. However, there remain areas within the borough where provision is insufficient, either for the disadvantaged two-year-old entitlement, the working families entitlement, or both. These gaps highlight the need for targeted action to ensure equitable access to funded childcare across all communities.

There is a lack of childcare in Ruislip Ward for both of the early years entitlements for two-year-olds, as demonstrated in the '**Resident benefit and consultation**' section of this report.

Financial Implications

There are no anticipated financial implications for the local authority arising from this proposal. Prior to recommending the change to the age range at Whiteheath Infant and Nursery School, the school was required to submit a financial forecast outlining projected costs and income associated with providing places for two-year-olds. This exercise ensured that the governing body fully understands the financial responsibilities and sustainability of the proposed provision.

RESIDENT BENEFIT

The benefit or impact upon Hillingdon residents, service users and communities

The proposed change will enable Whiteheath Infant and Nursery School to offer additional nursery places for eligible two-year-olds, thereby improving access to funded childcare for families in Hillingdon. Analysis of local provision indicates a clear unmet need for places in the area surrounding the school.

Disadvantaged Two-Year-Old Entitlement

Data shows significant gaps in provision for disadvantaged families:

- In Ruislip Ward, 14 two-year-olds are eligible under this entitlement, yet only five are currently accessing a place.
- Across Ruislip, Ruislip Manor, and South Ruislip Wards, 55 children meet the criteria, but only 26 are accessing a place.

This suggests that existing childcare provision is insufficient to meet demand.

Working Families Entitlement

Eligibility for this entitlement requires parents to obtain an HMRC-issued code, which must be validated by a childcare provider when a place is secured. Local authority data highlights further unmet need:

- In Ruislip Ward, 83 families are eligible, yet only 64 two-year-olds accessed a place in the Autumn term 2025.
- Across Ruislip, Ruislip Manor, and South Ruislip Wards, 284 families are eligible, but only 225 children are accessing a place.

These figures indicate that eligible families are struggling to secure funded childcare places.

By lowering its age range, Whiteheath Infant and Nursery School will be able to offer additional places for two-year-olds, increasing childcare options for families in Ruislip and surrounding wards and helping to address the current shortfall in provision.

Consultation & Engagement carried out

Consultation on this proposal was held from 27 October to 1 December 2025. There were 59 responses to the consultation and the feedback was as follows:

Do you agree with the proposal to lower the age range of Whiteheath Infant and Nursery School from 3-11 to 2-11 years of age?

Yes	31	(53%)
No	25	(43%)
Don't know	1	(2%)
Blank	1	(2%)

Of parents at the school, the response to the question ***Do you agree with the proposal to lower the age range of Whiteheath Infant and Nursery School from 3-11 to 2-11 years of age?*** was:

Yes	13	(93%)
No	1	(7%)

Do you think this proposal will disadvantage any residents in Hillingdon?

Yes	17	(29%)
No	31	(53%)
Don't know	10	(17%)

Whiteheath Infant and Nursery School have assessed the interest from parents with children at the school and 73% have said that they would be interested in using the provision for two-year-olds, if it is available. This showed that most parents who responded would have used the provision.

In terms of the comments received from the consultations, the following issues were raised:

Ability of schools to provide a suitable environment for two-year-olds

- **Developmental concerns:** Several respondents indicated that children aged two might be too young to begin school. They emphasized the importance of emotional, social, and physical development at this age, which could potentially be hindered by a structured school environment.
- **Emotional and social well-being** - several respondents stressed the emotional and social needs of 2-year-olds, noting that they require substantial emotional support, consistent nurturing, and a secure environment to flourish. There was concern that schools might not offer the necessary emotional care, potentially leading to stress and anxiety for the children.

- **Reduced specialisation in early years care:** Nurseries and childminders provide environments specifically designed for the developmental needs of 2-year-olds. Placing two-year-olds in primary schools that are not tailored to their developmental stage might result in developmental delays and challenges for families relying on specialised early years education.
- **The care needs of two-year-olds:** Respondents noted that primary schools might lack the necessary resources and trained personnel to address the specific needs of toddlers, including toilet training and sleep schedules.
- **Impact on existing early years education:** There were concerns about possible disruptions to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) system, designed for children under 5. Respondents felt that integrating two-year-olds into a more formal primary school setting might interfere with this critical period focused on learning through play.

Local authority response to the consultation:

The school has developed a comprehensive plan for delivering places for two-year-olds, recognising that the care, emotional well-being, and learning needs of this age group differ significantly from those of older children currently enrolled. To support this, the school has designed an environment specifically tailored to meet the developmental needs of two-year-olds, ensuring it is safe, nurturing, and conducive to early learning.

In addition, the school will receive ongoing support from the Early Years Quality Improvement Team, both prior to implementation and after places are offered, to ensure high standards of provision and continuous improvement.

Impact of these proposals on existing childcare settings

- **Business and practical concerns:** Some respondents pointed out potential negative effects on private nurseries, which might struggle to remain operational without the attendance of two-year-olds. Respondents mentioned that lowering the age for primary school admission to include two-year-olds could result in the closure of childminders, private nurseries, and reduced availability of childcare options. Additionally, there were concerns about the overall sustainability of the private sector.
- **Impact on existing early years providers:** It is possible that this change could affect local nurseries, pre-schools, and childminders, possibly leading to closures or reduced enrolment in these settings. This shift might impact the early years sector in the borough, affecting the availability and quality of childcare options for local families.

Local authority response to the consultation:

In meeting its statutory duties to ensure sufficiency of childcare, as far as is reasonably practicable, the local authority wants there to be a range of different childcare options available. This gives parents choice for childcare that meets their needs.

With the expansion of funded childcare since April 2024, there has been a large increase in the number of children who are eligible to receive funded childcare. Though many parents in Hillingdon have been able to find a childcare place, a smaller proportion of disadvantaged two-

year-olds are taking up a place, compared to the last few years. Take up by these children in the Ward in which this school is located, and other Wards in Ruislip, is relatively low, suggesting that it may be difficult for these parents to find funded childcare.

For the 'working parents' entitlement' for two-year-olds, in Ruislip, Ruislip Manor and South Ruislip Wards, there are a significant number of parents who have been confirmed as eligible to use funded childcare but are not accessing funded hours. This suggests that these parents may not have been able to find funded childcare which is appropriate for their circumstances.

From September 2025, the 'working parents' entitlement' expanded further, so that the number of funded hours that eligible children can receive has increased from 15 to 30 hours a week, from the term after they are nine months old. The expansion of the eligibility for the early years entitlement has led to an increase in the demand for childcare from parents.

Enabling the school to offer childcare for two-year-olds will help to address a potential shortfall in places, when more parents wish to use funded childcare. Existing childcare provision plays an important role in ensuring that parents have choices to use a range of different types of childcare. Though it is understandable that existing childcare settings would be concerned about additional competition, the school is offering a different model of childcare to most other group childcare settings e.g. open for term time only.

In terms of primary schools not offering flexible hours, they do offer parents a different choice than most other childcare provisions in the borough. With the reduction in the number of playgroups, there are fewer settings that are set up to offer part time, term time only places and this is the type of childcare that schools can provide. School nursery provision is not statutory and so parents have a choice about whether they use it or not. Where parents need full daycare, they can receive additional support from registered childminders, many of whom already drop off and pick up from schools in Hillingdon.

An Equalities Impact Assessment was not considered necessary for this proposal because its purpose is to increase access to early years provision for two-year-olds, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, rather than restrict or reduce access.

Additional comments received highlighted the following:

Parental Support: Numerous comments highlight the advantages of the proposal for parents, including children being able to start school nursery earlier, in a safe and nurturing environment. There was also feedback that this proposal would support working parents and provide continuity of care for children from ages two to seven, at the same school. There was some feedback that the proposal would be beneficial for the local community.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Finance have reviewed this report and concur with the Financial Implications set out above, noting there are no direct financial implications associated with the recommendation within this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The process for making prescribed alterations is governed by the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 as well as the statutory guidance, Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools August 2025. Local authorities and governing bodies must adhere to this guidance unless there is a compelling reason not to do so. There are no legal impediments to the recommendations within the report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL.

APPENDICES

Responses to the consultation on the proposal to lower the age range of Whiteheath Infant and Nursery School

Appendix A - Responses to the consultation on lowering the age range at Whiteheath Infant and Nursery School

If you answered 'No' or 'Don't know' to the proposal to lower the age range at Whiteheath Infant and Nursery School, please tell us why

Response 1: I don't believe that putting 2-year-olds and children aged nearly 5 together in the same setting will be a positive experience for either unless the nursery is drastically changed, with more space added for naps, changing rooms, difficult play areas outdoors (separate for young and older) and many more learning activities added that target older children. We specifically moved our child from another nursery to Whiteheath to increase her learning since we felt that the previous one, which did accept 2 year olds, was focused more on care than on learning. To then retrospectively add two year olds to the setting would drastically shift the dynamic. We may look to put her in a preschool should this happen.

Response 2: I am very concerned about the impact of placing children in mainstream schooling during such a sensitive stage of their development. At these early ages, children are still forming socially, emotionally, and cognitively, and the pressure of a mainstream academic environment can be inappropriate and even harmful. It feels unethical to push children into systems that may not meet their developmental needs. Many children in this country are already behind in their development, and this approach risks widening that gap rather than supporting them effectively. I strongly urge the government to consider age-appropriate, nurturing, and flexible educational alternatives that truly prioritise children's well-being and developmental readiness.

Response 3: Children do not need to be in a school environment from 2 years old. How will it help parents as its term time only? If government funded childcare properly, nurseries and preschools wouldn't be closing their doors. My son's preschool closed after 36 years in the community because they could afford to keep it open with the poor funding rate.

Response 4: As a local Early Years provider, I believe that lower the age range in our local schools will affect our business going forward

Response 5: It's too young for children to be in a school
Setting and it's open all year for working parents so has a lot of issue around holiday care

Response 6: 2 year olds need more attention and all nursery like them out of nappies because from my experience they don't even like 3 year old in them.
But on a bigger note you are taking away childminders work who do an amazing job!
We do all the hard work until they go to nursery at 3 years old you will drive childminders away.

Response 7: It will have a negative impact on childminders which means we will end up having to close our businesses

Response 8: It will make private preschools close. The ratio per children we have in private preschools is higher than school nursery's too

Response 9: Two-year-olds are far too young to be in a school environment

Response 10: Children are in school long enough - do they have nappy changing facilities, nap areas as they are still babies.

Response 11: 3 years is ideal age for this school. under three's should be part of PVI's

Response 12: 2-year-olds should not be going to school.
They need more informal setting.

Response 13: I don't think a school environment for children is appropriate for 2-year-olds.

Response 14: This will have a detrimental effect on childminders in the area.

Response 15: 2-year-olds are not ready for a school environment, most 2-year-olds are still in nappies and teachers /TA's Complain now about some 3-year-olds that are still in nappies. Also 2-year-olds are still needing a sleep. How will the "school adapt for on this " , the whole classroom environment will need to be adapted including resources.

Response 16: Now with primary schools taking 2-year-olds it is damaging for local nurseries and child minders. they should increase the capacity to take on more 3-year-olds.

Response 17: I believe it will have a negative impact on Early year settings in the area, many of which are already struggling.

Response 18: I work at a private charity run preschool and it will affect us

Response 19: I don't feel it's a nurturing environment for a two-year-old and it will be disruptive to my child's education.

Response 20: This will affect the PVI sector and many businesses who are already struggling to stay afloat with limited funding.

Response 21: We are concerned that lowering the starting age to 2 years could have a significant impact on local nurseries that provide early years care from birth to foundation stage. Many families rely on these nurseries for children under 3, and a shift towards school provision for 2-year-olds could reduce nursery enrolment and threaten their sustainability.

Furthermore, while some parents may see it as convenient to start their children in school earlier, school admissions are managed by the local authority, and priority is given to children living nearby or with siblings already at the school. Expanding the age range may not necessarily make the process easier for parents but could have unintended consequences for the local childcare ecosystem.

It is important to consider how this change might affect the availability and diversity of early years provision in the community

Response 22: I don't believe schools are the right place for two-year-old children.

Response 23: I have operated a day care nursery in the local area and a large proportion of our children are in the two-year age bracket, as previously, a child would join a school nursery class at around 3 years old. Should Whiteheath drop their entrance age to 2 years old I believe this will impact local businesses (pvi settings) and the likelihood is other schools will follow in order to secure children for their schools.

Response 24: I feel this will impact the private day nurseries in the Ruislip area

Response 25: I feel 2 years olds don't belong in a school environment/classroom. When I have previously seen two-year-olds in school the daily routine has been quite stringent and not always accommodating to individual children. I understand that this may be different in Whitehall

Response 26: Two-year-old can go to day nurseries

If you answered 'Yes' to the question 'Do you think the proposal to lower the age range at Whiteheath Infant and Nursery School disadvantages any residents, please tell us why?'

Response 1: As for reasons above

Response 2: I am deeply concerned that the government's decision already extending the 30-hour childcare funding from 9 months old will disadvantage younger children and put unnecessary pressure on families. This scheme risks encouraging parents to place their babies in formal childcare at an age when they need close, consistent attachment and nurturing at home. Early institutional care can have negative effects on emotional and social development, especially for very young children.

It also feels as though parents are being trapped into this system due to financial pressures, rather than being given genuine choice about what is best for their child. The focus should be on supporting families to care for their children in the way that best suits their individual needs, not on pushing them into schemes that may undermine healthy development.

Response 3: Local childminders as they will end up losing these children to schools.

Response 4: As a long-term owner of a private preschool and a Hillingdon resident my business will have to close.

Response 5: Pressure to potty train children too early and become independent,

Response 6: 3 year and above should be at school nursery any children under 3 should be with PVI's where the ratios are better maintained

Response 7: This will reduce the amount of potential two-year-olds that will use childminders for childcare.

Response 8: Childminders will be affected, by this

Response 9: Disadvantage to local residents that have nursery settings or childminding

Response 10: Same reason above

Response 11: You are profiting and concentrating on making money not educating so all the children are being disadvantaged.

Response 12: The proposed change could disadvantage residents who rely on local nurseries for children under 3. Reducing nursery enrolment options may limit choice, increase pressure on remaining early years providers, and affect families who prefer or need nursery-based care before school age.

Response 13: Because I know the staff and everyone who is working, they will try the best that will very successful.

Response 14: As the schools start to lower the age of intake to 2 years old many nurseries will not be able to function and close, leaving the demand for nursery places (pre 2 years old) outweighing the supply of suitable PVI places.

Response 15: Nursery services are already available in Hillingdon for children aged two

Any other comments on the proposal:

Response 1: Whiteheath infant is a fantastic school I love working there all the staff are very caring so younger children will feel happy and safe at Whiteheath thank you

Response 2: This would be a benefit to the parents in our local community having access to a school nursery from the age of 2 knowing that their children can progress through the same school flowing through to the Infants and Juniors

Response 3: My daughter turns 3 in February 2026, to be able to have her in the nursery before then would be fantastic

Response 4: Beneficial for parents who already have children in school, works in line with school holidays and same schedules

Response 5: This proposal is completely unnecessary and places additional pressure on parents. Extending government-funded childcare in this way could have serious negative impacts on the private childcare sector, which currently provides flexible, high-quality care that meets families' individual needs. The private sector plays a vital role in supporting working families and maintaining high standards of early years care, and government overreach risks destabilising that balance.

Rather than introducing blanket policies that may not suit all families, the government should focus on supporting existing providers and ensuring parents have genuine choice. For many, private childcare arrangements already work well and these should be protected, not undermined.

Response 6: Will the provision be school hours only, term time only? Children needs at 2 differs from the needs of three-year-old? What qualifications will the staff have? Has the council considered the impact it will have on local childminders?

Response 7: Additional two-year-old spaces in Hillingdon will ensure the demand for spaces for two-year-olds accessing additional funding can be met.

Response 8: Fully support this. It will be great of Ruislip.

Response 9: Schools should follow the training and ratios that PVI's follow then they should also be vetted and inspected like PVI's before enrolling children under 3 years of age

Response 10: Pls don't mix two- and three-year-olds. Pls don't send two-year-olds to schools. They need to be in informal setting like nursery or childminder

Response 11: The school would also need to provide more staff to cover ratios and how will the "three-year-olds" learning be considered when they have two-year-olds that will not yet have learnt the same skills as 3 would learnt

Response 12: With lower birth rates for the last few years more settings opening we need to be sustainable for everyone

Response 13: It is important to consider how this change might affect the availability and diversity of early years provision in the community

Response 14: I have a nearly two-year-old and this would benefit us immensely

Response 15: My understanding is that you have a supportive environment for children with SEN and there are very limited options at the two-year-old range in the area, it has been very difficult to find a nursery with adequate knowledge and understanding.

Response 16: I believe this decision would be very positive because it gives children the chance to start learning earlier in a safe and nurturing environment. It also supports working parents, provides continuity from age 2 to 7 within the same school, and helps the community by expanding access to funded childcare and high-quality early education.

Response 17: Nurseries in schools do not get an in-depth Ofsted inspection that private day care providers do.

Response 18: I would personally benefit from this change

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FOSTERING REVIEW: DRAFT FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Committee name	Children, Families & Education Select Committee
Officer reporting	Ryan Dell, Democratic Services
Papers with report	Appendix A – Updated scoping report Appendix B – Guidance on undertaking policy reviews
Ward	All

HEADLINES

Background

As part of the review into fostering, Members are advised to consider draft findings, conclusions and draft recommendations on the review for discussion. These will be with the intention of improving the fostering offer for young people and foster carers.

The Committee has held a number of witness sessions, outlined below

Witness session	Purpose/ theme	Witnesses/ officers attending
Witness session 1 – 13 November 2025	Understanding fostering in Hillingdon	Director of Children's Safeguarding & Care Assistant Director of Care Provision Services Service Manager – Care Delivery Virtual School Headteacher Assistant Director for Education Fostering & Permanence Panel rep
Witness Session 2a – 16 December 2025	Young peoples' experiences/ best practices	6x Children in care/ care experienced young people Children's Participation Team Manager Children's Participation Officer Fostering & Permanence Panel rep
Witness Session 2b – 04 December 2025	Foster carer experiences/ best practices	3x Foster carers

RECOMMENDATION

That the Select Committee consider findings, conclusions and draft recommendations in relation to the review.

Note: To assist Members, Democratic Services will share notes from each of the witness sessions. These will be circulated separately to the Committee when ready in advance of the meeting.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1) Scoping report – looking at the original parameters of the review

The updated review scoping report is attached so Members can be reminded of the original Terms of Reference as set out below, and whether the Committee has met these:

1. To understand the needs and experiences of children in foster care through examining demographics, underrepresented groups, placement types, placement stability, educational attainment, wellbeing and emerging trends.
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of current recruitment and retention strategies, and support available to foster carers, including the impact of the new fostering offer.
3. To identify barriers to fostering for potential carers and children in care, and to identify opportunities for improvement.
4. To formulate recommendations to Cabinet aimed at strengthening Hillingdon's fostering provision, thereby improving outcomes for children in care.

2) Policy review guidance

Members are asked to consider whether draft findings and recommendations:

- Meet the initial aims / objectives of the review (as above)
- Be SMART, Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound
- Not be a short-term fix, but a lasting outcome
- Consider the financial aspect, e.g. cost neutral, provide savings or if at a cost, then affordable – and if possible aligned with the MTFF (budget planning process)
- Are based on a broad evidence base as possible and 'user or resident' insight
- Not create additional bureaucracy, e.g. if it relates to a policy, then to seek to review or amend existing policies (unless there is an absolute imperative for a new policy)
- If publicity or wider engagement or education is recommended, to target such communications as best as possible rather than generally
- Consider 'conclusions' as well as any specific recommendations.

RESIDENT BENEFIT

This review aims to help improve the fostering offer, to improve outcomes for young people and foster carers.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None at this stage, pending any committee recommendations.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None at this stage, pending any committee recommendations.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Updated scoping report

Appendix B – Guidance on undertaking policy reviews

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Major Review Working Title	Caring for Our Children: Enhancing Fostering Provision and Support
Committee	Children, Families & Education Select Committee
Review Year	2025/26 MY

1. OBJECTIVES

Aim of review

This review aims to assess the effectiveness of the new fostering offer in Hillingdon and will explore opportunities for improvement through a focus on recruitment and retention; support for foster carers; and outcomes and experiences of children in care.

The review will also assist in recruiting more foster carers; raising awareness of the benefits of fostering; and highlighting the positive outcomes it can have for young people.

The review also aims to ensure that the service is responsive, inclusive and aligned with Corporate Parenting responsibilities so that all children in care can live in stable, loving homes.

Terms of Reference

1. To understand the needs and experiences of children in foster care through examining demographics, underrepresented groups, placement types, placement stability, educational attainment, wellbeing and emerging trends.
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of current recruitment and retention strategies, and support available to foster carers, including the impact of the new fostering offer.
3. To identify barriers to fostering for potential carers and children in care, and to identify opportunities for improvement.
4. To formulate recommendations to Cabinet aimed at strengthening Hillingdon's fostering provision, thereby improving outcomes for children in care.

2. BACKGROUND

Context

Foster care plays a vital role in providing a safe, stable and nurturing environment for children who cannot live with their birth families. The Council has a statutory duty to ensure high-quality care and support for both foster carers and children. Nationally, there is a shortage of foster carers, and local authorities are facing increasing pressure to meet the diverse needs of children in care.

Scope

The review will focus on:

- Council-run fostering services and commissioned providers
- Recruitment and retention of foster carers
- Placement stability
- Outcomes for children in foster care (including their transition to independence/ Staying Close/ Staying Put)
- Support services for children in foster care including social work, health and education
- Support services for foster carers (e.g. Mockingbird) including training, respite and financial packages

Known issues

- National shortage of foster carers
- Recruitment and retention challenges, particularly for carers of teenagers and children with complex needs, and the time needed to recruit new carers
- Limited awareness/ promotion of fostering opportunities
- Placement instability/ breakdowns
- Support and training for foster carers
- Transition planning for children leaving care

Connected matters

- Corporate Parenting – ensuring the Council meets its responsibilities to children in care
- SEND Strategy – supporting children with additional needs in foster care
- Youth Justice – links between care experience and youth offending
- Education – attainment and attendance of children in care
- Equalities – ensuring diverse and inclusive fostering provision
- Health & wellbeing – safeguarding children in care

Legislative context

Key Legislation and Regulations:

- [Children Act 1989](#): outlines the responsibilities of local authorities in providing services for children in need.
- [Children Act 2004](#): emphasises five key outcomes: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, and achieving economic well-being.
- [Fostering Services \(England\) Regulations 2011](#): outlines the standards and requirements for fostering services.
- [Care Planning, Placement and Case Review \(England\) Regulations 2010](#): focuses on the planning, monitoring and review of children's placements in foster care.
- [Care Leavers \(England\) Regulations 2010](#): covers arrangements for children leaving foster care.

- [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#): establishes seven corporate parenting principles that local authorities must follow to ensure they act in the best interests of children in their care.
- [National Minimum Standards \(NMS\)](#): provides best practice guidance for fostering agencies, setting out the minimum expectations for their services and operations, [according to Simply Fostering](#).
- [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#): outlines essential guidelines for multi-agency collaboration to protect and promote the welfare of children.

Key Aspects of Fostering Legislation:

- **Safeguarding Children:**
 - A core principle of fostering legislation is the protection of children from harm and abuse. Foster carers are expected to provide a safe and nurturing environment, and fostering services have a duty to ensure the welfare of children in their care.
- **Support for Foster Carers:**
 - Fostering legislation recognises the vital role of foster carers and emphasises the need for them to receive adequate support, training, and information to enable them to provide effective care.
- **Placement and Review:**
 - Legislation outlines the process for placing children in foster care, including the assessment of foster carers, the development of care plans, and the regular review of placements to ensure they are meeting the child's needs.
- **Leaving Care:**
 - Legislation addresses the support and arrangements for young people leaving foster care, ensuring a smooth transition to adulthood.

Other Relevant Considerations:

- **Private Fostering:**
 - Separate guidance and regulations exist for private fostering arrangements, which involve children being cared for by someone who is not a close relative.
- **Health and Safety:**
 - Foster carers are expected to adhere to health and safety standards, including those related to fire safety, first aid, and medication management.
- **Behaviour Management:**
 - Fostering legislation and guidance address the management of children's behaviour in foster care, emphasising positive approaches and de-escalation techniques.

3. EVIDENCE GATHERING

Core intelligence required

- Number of foster carers and children in care
- Demographics of foster carers and children in care
- Information on recruitment and retention practices
- Data on placement types and stability
- Feedback from foster carers and children in care

Cabinet Members & Service relevant to this review

Remit

Portfolio(s)	Directorate	Service Areas
Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education	Children's Services	Children's Social Care (incl. safeguarding & corporate parenting)
		Corporate Parenting Panel
		Prevention & Youth Justice (incl. youth services, stronger families and adolescent mental health)
		Education & SEND (incl. Adult & Community Learning, Skills, Lifelong Learning, Music Services and School Travel)
	Adult Services & Health	Children and Families Support Services (incl. Early Years and Children's Centres)

This Select Committee has also established a Panel to support strong oversight of the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities. The Committee may wish to engage the Panel in its work.

Discussions on draft or emerging recommendations may be undertaken with relevant Cabinet Members as per the Protocol on Overview & Scrutiny and Cabinet Relations approved by full Council.

Potential witnesses and site visits

Internal witnesses:

- Children's Social Care
- Fostering Team
- Virtual School
- Participation Team
- Fostering & Permanence Panel representative

External witnesses:

- Foster carers
- Care experienced young people

Site visits:

- Fostering events - <https://discover.hillingdon.gov.uk/fostering-events>

Initial Papers/ further reading

- Hillingdon Fostering Statement of Purpose ([Hillingdon Statement of Purpose Fostering update 2023 \(1\).pdf](#))
- Ofsted inspection reports
- Local Placement Sufficiency Strategy

Lines of Enquiry

Specific lines of enquiry will be worked up prior to witness sessions.

1. Context and current landscape
 - i. What are the current demographics of foster carers and children in care?
 - ii. Which cohorts of young people are underrepresented in foster care?
2. The new fostering offer
 - i. What does the new fostering offer consist of?
 - ii. How does the new fostering offer compare to the previous offer?
3. Recruitment and retention
 - i. What are the current recruitment and retention strategies?
 - ii. What are the key challenges in recruiting and retaining foster carers?
4. Support and experience
 - i. How are foster carers supported and trained (including PACE/ safeguarding training)?
 - ii. What are the lived experiences of foster carers (including those in the mockingbird constellation) and children in foster care?
5. Placement stability and outcomes
 - i. How effective are placement matching and stability efforts?
 - ii. How can we improve placement stability and reduce placement breakdowns, and what procedures are in place for when placements break down?
6. Partnerships and cost effectiveness
 - i. How does Hillingdon work with the Foster with West London hub?
 - ii. What are the comparative costs and outcomes of in-house fostering vs independent fostering agencies and residential care?

Some early ideas to consider:

1. Enhanced training and wellbeing support for carers
2. Peer mentoring schemes
3. Digital platform for fostering information and applications
4. Community engagement campaigns
5. Flexible financial support packages

4. REVIEW PLANNER

Proposed timeframe & milestones for the review:

Meeting Date	Action	Purpose/ theme	Witnesses/ officers attending
25 September 2025, 19:00	Agree Scoping Report	What do we need?	Democratic Services

13 November 2025, 19:00	Witness Session 1	Understanding fostering in Hillingdon	Director of Children's Safeguarding & Care Assistant Director of Care Provision Services Service Manager – Care Delivery Virtual School Headteacher Assistant Director for Education Fostering & Permanence Panel rep
16 December 2025, 17:30 TBC	Witness Session 2a (Private session)	Young peoples' experiences/ best practices	6x Children in care/ care experienced young people Children's Participation Team Manager Children's Participation Officer Fostering & Permanence Panel rep
04 December 2025, 17:30	Witness Session 2b (Private session)	Foster carer experiences/ best practices	3x Foster carers
07 January 2026, 19:00	Draft findings, conclusions and recommendations	Drafting recommendations	Democratic Services
05 February 2026, 19:00	Findings, conclusions and recommendations	Finalising recommendations	Democratic Services
12 March 2026, 19:00	Approval of final report	Finalise proposals to Cabinet	Democratic Services
23 April 2026, 19:00	Target Cabinet reporting		

Resource requirements

No financial assessment required at scoping stage. Any recommendations with budget implications will be discussed with Cabinet Members and the Leader.

Equalities impact

The review will consider how to ensure inclusive access to fostering and reduce disparities in outcomes for children in care.

Scrutiny Benefit

This review will:

- Improve outcomes for children in care
- Strengthen support for foster carers
- Promote joined-up working across services
- Drive service improvement and innovation
- Support future external inspections
- Support strategic priorities for children and families

Author of Scoping Report	Ryan Dell, Democratic Services Officer Mark Braddock, Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Date	Updated 18/12/25

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Appendix B - Guidance on undertaking policy reviews

Over the years, Hillingdon's overview and scrutiny committees have undertaken successful in-depth reviews of Council services and policies. This has resulted in a number of positive changes locally, with some also affecting policy at a national level. Such committees engage Councillors in a wide range of Council activity and build a greater understanding about service provision to residents.

Policy reviews generally seek to:

1. Address a [significant] matter affecting the Borough
2. Seek to improve the delivery and/or efficiency of local services
3. Consider changes to policies or procedures to improve outcomes to residents/users

REVIEW PHASES

The typical phases of a review are as follows and set out further below:

- 1 Selection of topic
- 2 Scoping the review / setting out objectives
- 3 Witness & evidence stage (this is the main activity)
- 4 Findings and Draft recommendations (possible early report draft)
- 5 Final report approved by Committee
- 6 Referred to Cabinet for consideration
- 7 Monitoring the implementation of recommendations once approved / amended by Cabinet at meetings, i.e. in six months

1. Selection of topic

It is always best to sound out and check the feasibility of potential review topics early on, as there will be lots of ideas coming forward and often knowing what topic will add most value will be difficult to gauge at this stage. It is important not to generalise, e.g. a review into waste services.

It may also not be known whether a topic is currently under review by the Cabinet or Council officers or part of a planned service transformation in due course. All of this and other factors need to be investigated and in particular, any duplication of review activity should not take place.

Whilst most policy reviews last a number of months, not all policy review ideas will suit this and may benefit from a single meeting review. It really depends on the scope of the review. If very narrow, i.e. a particular service policy, then a single meeting review may suffice. If a review seeks to look at an entire way a service operates then a number of months may be required to ensure you can undertake all your witness sessions and secure the necessary evidence and information before you formulate your findings.

Ideas for review topics can come from a number of sources including:

- Committee Members
- Cabinet Members
- Council officers
- External partners/ organisations
- Residents
- Ombudsman findings

When Councillors or the Committee itself considers a potential review topic, it is recommended running it through the Scrutiny Topic Scorecard (see Annex A). This gives you the opportunity to 'score' topics based upon their impacts under the following criteria:

Resident focused	Influence	Achievable
Correct remit	New	Wider support
Drives improvement	Drives transformation and efficiency	National impact

Another way to consider a potential review topic, is to add this as an information item at an upcoming meeting on your work programme, to probe the matter further with Council officers and ascertain whether it merits a fuller review – again perhaps running it through the Scorecard above.

It is strongly advised that one review topic is undertaken at any one time, given resources.

2. Scoping report

Once a topic is agreed upon by the Committee, then officers will prepare a scoping report setting out the objectives of the review for your consideration. The scoping report will show how the review can be timetabled and structured, i.e. through themed witness sessions, along with details of potential witnesses and other contextual information to get the review started, e.g. lines of enquiry or questioning of witnesses.

The scoping report is a 'live' document owned by the Committee. Should the review's focus change mid-review, then the scoping document and its objectives can be adapted.

3. Witness and evidence stage

Ultimately, the Committee's efforts are at their best when external witnesses and residents participate, adding value to intelligence gathering and findings. In support of this, Committees have undertaken a variety of both formal and informal activity "in meetings" and "outside meetings". It is important to pull together a broad evidence based for any potential findings later on. Additionally, the ability for Councillors to bring their 'local' insight is highly valuable. Activities the Committee can undertake include:

- Surveys/ social media
- Promotion of review to seek views
- Invite the relevant Cabinet Member to attend for their views
- Question key council officers
- Hold informal workshops
- Networking events, e.g. with partners
- Have closed meetings, i.e. confidential, such as social care clients
- Commission reports from council officers / externally
- Request data and intelligence on the topic
- Visits to other local authorities
- Undertake site visits within the Borough or council facilities
- Appoint experts or advisors to join the Committee throughout its review
- Selecting the best range of witnesses to get a real user / resident perspectives
- Invite national experts in their field

Whilst information will be provided to Councillors, it may be helpful when preparing for this stage of a review, that Councillors:

- Prepare their draft questions for each witness in advance;
- Read a witness bio or find out more about their organisation;
- Do their own additional research on the topic - you may find something officers don't!

- Use their network of councillors in other local authorities to seek views;
- Tell residents at Surgeries / Ward Walks about your review, get their thoughts.

4. Findings and draft recommendations & 5. Final Report

After hearing from witnesses and receiving evidence, the Committee then will meet to pull together all the information and shape its collective findings, i.e. what needs to be improved or changed as a result.

The Committee will form 'draft' recommendations from this, which consistent with the Protocol on Cabinet and Scrutiny Relations, are usually shared with the Cabinet Member for their feedback and valuable insight.

In developing any recommendation, the Committee should bear in mind the following:

- Meet the initial aims / objectives of the review
- Be SMART, Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound
- Not be a short-term fix, but a lasting outcome
- Consider the financial aspect, e.g. cost neutral, provide savings or if at a cost, then affordable – and if possible aligned with the MTFF (budget planning process)
- Be based on a broad evidence base as possible and 'user or resident' insight
- Not create additional bureaucracy, e.g. if it relates to a policy, then to seek to review or amend existing policies (unless there is an absolute imperative for a new policy)
- If publicity or wider engagement or education is recommended, to target such communications as best as possible rather than generally
- Consider 'conclusions' as well as any specific recommendations.

Around this time, the Democratic Services Officer supporting the Committee will advise further on findings and drafting recommendations. Throughout this process, their role is critical to the Committee, to guide Members and secure the information and any witness activity that Members wish to undertake. They also work with the Chairman to bring the final draft report for the Committee to approve before it is scheduled to Cabinet.

6. Referred to Cabinet & 7. Monitoring of recommendations

The Committee's report will be shared with the Leader and Cabinet Member and scheduled to a Cabinet meeting as soon as possible. There is a legal requirement for any such report to be considered by the Cabinet.

Should Cabinet approve the Committee's recommendations, then they become official policy and officers are charged with implementing them.

A post report review is undertaken in say 6 months or a years' time to see how the Committee's recommendations have been implemented. This is scheduled on your work programme.

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Minutes

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

28 October 2025

Meeting held at Committee Room 6 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW



	<p>To Members of the Panel:</p> <p>Voting Members: Councillor Nick Denys (Chair) Councillor Peter Smallwood OBE Councillor Jan Sweeting</p> <p>Non-voting Members: Representatives of the Children in Care Council, and Care Experienced Young People Ash Knight, Participation Manager Bridget Owen, Designated Nurse Looked After Children (Harrow and Hillingdon) (NHS North West London ICB)</p> <p>Officers Present: Poppy Reddy, Assistant Director, Permanence & Specialist Service Lisa Steel, Virtual School Headteacher Donna Hugh, Assistant director of Care Provision Services Filiz Osman, Safeguarding Manager Senay Nidai, Assistant Director of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance Tamisa John-Baptiste, Independent Reviewing Officer Ryan Dell, Democratic Services Officer</p> <p>Also Present: Katie Randall, Clinical Services Manager, Harrow 0-19 Service, CCN Team, Special School Nursing and Looked After Children, CNWL</p> <p>* This meeting was co-chaired by a Children in Care Council member</p>
16.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies had been received from Councillor Heena Makwana with Councillor Peter Smallwood OBE substituting.</p>
17.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
18.	<p>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting dated 29 July 2025 be approved as an accurate record.</p>
19.	<p>KICA FEEDBACK (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p>

Officers and the young people presented their highlights of the recent Kids in Care Awards (KICA) event, which included a bouncy castle and a stilt walker. The young people noted that KICA was always fun.

This had been the largest KICA event to date, with 927 award nominations, up from 700+ and 500+ in previous years. The event was growing and took place in a new location at Hillingdon House. Lots of positive feedback had been received and it was noted that, in future, a larger space may be needed for a bigger ceremony. Officers and the young people shared a video of KICA.

Officers and the young people also described their recent trip to Snowdonia, funded by the Domestic Violence Reduction Unit. The young people commended the team for taking them on the trip and noted that, whilst they had needed some encouragement to go on the trip initially, it had been a 'life-changing' experience which included activities such as river weaselling, exploring underground caves and mountain climbing. The young people described it as an amazing experience, and each of the young people received a personal card, keyring and gifts from the team. The young people noted that they had felt more motivated since the trip, and had applied for jobs, college and volunteering opportunities. Officers and the young people shared video of the trip, and noted that a further trip had been arranged for February 2026.

Members commended the young people for sharing their experiences of KICA and the Snowdonia trip, and noted that the young people could help encourage each other in attending future trips.

Members asked how to keep growing the KICA event without losing its special feeling. Officers noted that finances did play a part. It was always the intention to invite all young people, and it was hoped that there would not be a need to cap numbers in future.

Members thanked officers and the young people for sharing their experiences.

RESOLVED: That the Panel noted the presentation

20. **INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER (IRO) ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25** (*Agenda Item 5*)

Officers noted that it was a statutory requirement for all cared for children to have an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO), and reviews took place every six months. It was the role of IROs to advocate for young people, and they could escalate concerns if required.

Each IRO meeting was different and could be conducted virtually or face-to-face, depending on the preference of the young person. While some of the meetings can be difficult, lots of work was done behind the scenes for the benefit of the young people.

The young people commended the IROs, noting that they had a good relationship, and that the IRO was like a best friend. The IROs noted that they could be a stable presence and were often the most consistent professional for the young people.

Members noted the role of the IROs to challenge the local authority and asked if they felt they were able to do this effectively. This depended on the situation, but there were mechanisms for escalation to Service Managers and Assistant Directors where appropriate. There was not often a need for escalation, and there were a good working

relationship and communication between services. It was important to have these conversations, including in between reviews.

Members noted that there was not a high turnover of IROs and commended this consistency.

Officers also commended the IROs and noted that social workers wanted the independent challenge from them. Officers further commended the involvement of young people in their own reviews, and it was noted that IROs attended events such as KICA.

Colleagues from the health team noted the IROs were very helpful. For example, when the young people asked questions to the health team, the health team could go to the IROs for help.

Members asked about placement types for young people, noting that numbers of foster placements were lower than neighbouring boroughs. Officers noted that where young people were aged 16+, they would more likely go into semi-independent living rather than a foster placement.

Members highlighted the 38 young people in the category of 'secure units, children's homes and hostels' and asked for more information on this. Officers advised that these young people were in semi-independent living or children's homes. No young people were in secure units, and none were being placed in hostels.

It was further noted that some young people moved through the National Transfer Scheme, and that 12 new residential units (one-bed, two-bed and three-bed) were being prepared for registration in the borough.

The Chair requested that an update on accommodation be added to the work programme for the next meeting.

Officers commended the IROs for their role in assisting the Virtual School as this helped to provide a holistic approach for the young people.

Members noted that 63.5% of children and young people actively spoke for themselves during their cared for children reviews and asked how this could be improved. Officers noted that they were working across services on methods for ensuring the voice of all young people was heard, including young people with disabilities and young people who were non-verbal. It was suggested that those young people who did not actively speak during their reviews may include those aged under five, and that a further breakdown of this information could be included in future.

Members asked about the safeguarding element when young people did not want to speak during their reviews. Officers noted that IROs would communicate with the child and young person in a method they preferred, including by phone call, WhatsApp, emails or text messages. IROs could also offer advocacy where appropriate.

Members asked about dental checks. This was a national issue, and there was no longer a school toothbrush campaign for young people aged over seven. It was noted that Harrow Council had a dentist specifically for cared for children.

On health assessments, as of August 2025, Hillingdon was at 74% take-up for review health assessments (RHAs) and 33% for initial health assessments (IHAs), while the target was 95% take-up. It was noted that Harrow Council held twice-weekly meetings

	<p>with Heads of Service in the local authority and representatives from CNWL and the ICB, and that this was having a positive effect. It was hoped that this could be arranged with Hillingdon. It was suggested that these matters would be raised with the Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education.</p> <p>Health was a big part of IRO meetings. There was a small cohort of young people who had refused health assessments. It was suggested that young people may not feel the need for a health assessment in these instances.</p> <p>It was suggested that there had been cases where foster carers had reported that they were unable to bring their young people to their health assessments.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parenting Panel considered the report and noted its content.</p>
21.	<p>ANNUAL REPORT – CARED FOR CHILDREN & FOSTERING AND ADOPTION 2024-25 (<i>Agenda Item 6</i>)</p> <p>Officers introduced the report, noting that it had been renamed from the Looked After Children to the Cared for Children annual report.</p> <p>At the end of the financial year, Hillingdon had acted as Corporate Parent to 312 Cared for Children and 602 Care Experienced Young People (18-25 years old). This represented a decrease of five Cared for Children and a decrease of one Care Experienced Young Person from the previous year.</p> <p>During the year, all young people had been seen by their Social Workers, and 70% of visits had been completed within statutory timescales. This demonstrated an increase from the previous year's figure of 69%.</p> <p>79.7% of care experienced young people were in education, employment or training, up from 76% in the previous year.</p> <p>12 young people had been placed for adoption, four of which were in early permanence placements. It was noted that it would be helpful to have more early permanence placements, especially for older young people.</p> <p>There had been an increase in the number of Special Guardianship Orders to 218, and there was robust support for SGO carers. 175 received financial support. It was noted that there was a current Welfare Bill which would include additional support for Special Guardian carers, and the revised Local Offer would include feedback from young people and Special Guardian carers.</p> <p>Members commended the report, and asked about challenges for the year ahead, specifically around that of promoting training and workplace opportunities for young people. It was noted that work experience was needed for young people, and career development month was upcoming.</p> <p>Related to this, Hillingdon was signed up to the pan-London Family Business Model. This was a project focused on supporting care experienced young people into employment, based on the principle of corporate parenting. It was noted that Level 2 qualifications often presented a barrier in this. 12 young people aged 16+ were currently studying for English and Maths qualifications. There was a career fair upcoming in November. Two young people had recently been recruited to the Participation team and were due to start</p>

	<p>soon. The Family Hubs had offered 3x one-year work experience placements to young people, tailored to the young person. An update on the Family Business Model would be added for a future meeting.</p> <p>A Council Tax Policy for Care Experienced Young People was now in place.</p> <p>The Brokerage Team commissioned independent accommodation in approximately 30 House of Multiple Occupation (HMO) properties specifically for young people aged 18 and above.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parenting Panel noted the content of the report</p>
22	<p>CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE DATA Q2 2025-26 (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>)</p> <p>Officers introduced the report.</p> <p>Members commended the offer of gym memberships at Council-owned facilities for young people in the Staying Close project.</p> <p>It was noted that there was a policy for a number of driving lessons for young people, rather than a fee.</p> <p>The Virtual School had delivered its second conference at The Winston Churchill Theatre for designated teachers for cared for children, welcoming a wide range of schools and partner organisations. Highlights included keynote speaker Ashley John-Baptiste, and an inspiring panel of care experienced young people. Feedback from the conference was very positive, with attendees noting learning new ideas and a deeper understanding of the experiences of young people.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parenting Panel noted the content of the report</p>
23.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>)</p> <p>Members considered the work programme.</p> <p>It was suggested that the Panel could be renamed, and the Panel welcomed the suggestion that the young people suggest ideas for a new name.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Corporate Parenting Panel:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Considered the report; 2. Added an update on accommodation for the next meeting; and 3. Added an update on the pan-London family business model for a future meeting
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 5:30 pm, closed at 6:50 pm.</p>

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions, please contact Ryan Dell on democratic@hillingdon.gov.uk.

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CABINET FORWARD PLAN

Committee name	Children, Families & Education Select Committee
Officer reporting	Ryan Dell, Democratic Services
Papers with report	Appendix A – Latest Forward Plan
Ward	As shown on the Forward Plan

HEADLINES

To monitor the Cabinet's latest Forward Plan which sets out key decisions and other decisions to be taken by the Cabinet collectively and Cabinet Members individually over the coming year. The report sets out the actions available to the Committee.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Children, Families & Education Select Committee notes the Cabinet Forward Plan.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The Cabinet Forward Plan is published monthly, usually around the first or second week of each month. It is a rolling document giving the required public notice of future key decisions to be taken. Should a later edition of the Forward Plan be published after this agenda has been circulated, Democratic Services will update the Committee on any new items or changes at the meeting.

As part of its Terms of Reference, each Select Committee should consider the Forward Plan and, if it deems necessary, comment as appropriate to the decision-maker on the items listed which relate to services within its remit. For reference, the Forward Plan helpfully details which Select Committee's remit covers the relevant future decision item listed.

The Select Committee's monitoring role of the Forward Plan can be undertaken in a variety of ways, including both pre-decision and post-decision scrutiny of the items listed. The provision of advance information on future items listed (potentially also draft reports) to the Committee in advance will often depend upon a variety of factors including timing or feasibility, and ultimately any such request would rest with the relevant Cabinet Member to decide. However, the 2019 Protocol on Overview & Scrutiny and Cabinet Relations (part of the Hillingdon Constitution) does provide guidance to Cabinet Members to:

- Actively support the provision of relevant Council information and other requests from the Committee as part of their work programme;
- Where feasible, provide opportunities for committees to provide their input on forthcoming executive reports as set out in the Forward Plan to enable wider pre-decision scrutiny (in addition to those statutorily required to come before committees, *i.e. policy framework documents – see para. below*).

As mentioned above, there is both a constitutional and statutory requirement for Select Committees to provide comments on the Cabinet's draft budget and policy framework proposals after publication. These are automatically scheduled in advance to multi-year work programmes.

Therefore, in general, the Committee may consider the following actions on specific items listed on the Forward Plan:

	Committee action	When	How
1	To provide specific comments to be included in a future Cabinet or Cabinet Member report on matters within its remit.	<p>As part of its pre-decision scrutiny role, this would be where the Committee wishes to provide its influence and views on a particular matter within the formal report to the Cabinet or Cabinet Member before the decision is made.</p> <p>This would usually be where the Committee has previously considered a draft report or the topic in detail, or where it considers it has sufficient information already to provide relevant comments to the decision-maker.</p>	<p>These would go within the standard section in every Cabinet or Cabinet Member report called "Select Committee comments".</p> <p>The Cabinet or Cabinet Member would then consider these as part of any decision they make.</p>
2	To request further information on future reports listed under its remit.	<p>As part of its pre-decision scrutiny role, this would be where the Committee wishes to discover more about a matter within its remit that is listed on the Forward Plan.</p> <p>Whilst such advance information can be requested from officers, the Committee should note that information may or may not be available in advance due to various factors, including timescales or the status of the drafting of the report itself and the formulation of final recommendation(s). Ultimately, the provision of any information in advance would be a matter for the Cabinet Member to decide.</p>	<p>This would be considered at a subsequent Select Committee meeting. Alternatively, information could be circulated outside the meeting if reporting timescales require this.</p> <p>Upon the provision of any information, the Select Committee may then decide to provide specific comments (as per 1 above).</p>
3	To request the Cabinet Member considers providing a draft of the report, if feasible, for the Select Committee to consider prior to it being considered formally for decision.	<p>As part of its pre-decision scrutiny role, this would be where the Committee wishes to provide an early steer or help shape a future report to Cabinet, e.g., on a policy matter.</p> <p>Whilst not the default position, Select Committees do occasionally receive draft versions of Cabinet reports prior to their formal consideration. The provision of such draft reports in advance may depend upon different factors, e.g., the timings required for that decision. Ultimately any request to see a draft report early would need the approval of the relevant Cabinet Member.</p>	<p>Democratic Services would contact the relevant Cabinet Member and Officer upon any such request.</p> <p>If agreed, the draft report would be considered at a subsequent Select Committee meeting to provide views and feedback to officers before they finalise it for the Cabinet or Cabinet Member. An opportunity to provide specific comments (as per 1 above) is also possible.</p>
4	To identify a forthcoming report that may merit a post-decision review at a later Select Committee meeting.	<p>As part of its post-decision scrutiny and broader reviewing role, this would be where the Select Committee may wish to monitor the implementation of a certain Cabinet or Cabinet Member decision listed/taken at a later stage, i.e., to review its effectiveness after a period of 6 months.</p> <p>The Committee should note that this is different to the use of the post-decision scrutiny 'call-in' power which seeks to ask the Cabinet or Cabinet Member to formally re-consider a decision up to 5 working days after the decision notice has been issued. This is undertaken via the new Scrutiny Call-in App members of the relevant Select Committee.</p>	<p>The Committee would add the matter to its multi-year work programme after a suitable time has elapsed upon the decision expected to be made by the Cabinet or Cabinet Member.</p> <p>Relevant service areas may be best to advise on the most appropriate time to review the matter once the decision is made.</p>

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- [Protocol on Overview & Scrutiny and Cabinet relations adopted by Council 12 September 2019](#)
- [Scrutiny Call-in App](#)

					Decision-Maker				Cabinet Member Lead & Officers				Status
Ref	Business Item	Further information	Ward(s)	NEW ITEM	CABINET meeting	Cabinet Member	Shareholder Committee	Full COUNCIL	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Report Author	Corporate Director Responsible	Public or Private (with reason)
DECEMBER 2025													
26	Biannual Performance Report	Cabinet will receive its biannual report performance report for the current year, looking back on how the Council is delivering on key service metrics and the Council Strategy - and looking ahead at planned actions.	N/A		23 December				Cllr Eddie Lavery / All Cabinet Members	All	Ian Kavanagh	Matthew Wallbridge	Public
34	Consideration of setting a licensed deficit budget for any schools in the Borough	A standard report each year, where Cabinet may consider whether it is required to set any licensed deficit budget for any schools that have applied.	N/A		23 December				Cllr Susan O'Brien - Children, Families & Education / Cllr Eddie Lavery - Finance & Transformation	Children, Families & Education	Luisa Hansen	Steve Muldoon / Julie Kelly	Public
SI	Public Preview of matters to be considered in private	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private and confidential matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		23 December				TBC	TBC	Democratic Services		Public
SI	Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		23 December				TBC	TBC	Democratic Services		Public

Ref	Business Item	Further information	Ward(s)	NEW ITEM	Decision-Maker				Cabinet Member Lead & Officers				Status
					CABINET meeting	Cabinet Member	Shareholder Committee	Full COUNCIL	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Report Author	Corporate Director Responsible	Public or Private (with reason)
SI	2026/27 Budget and Future Medium-Term Financial Strategy (BUDGET FRAMEWORK)	This report will set out the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), which includes the draft General Fund reserve budget and capital programme for 2026/27 for consultation, along with indicative projections for the following four years. This will also include the HRA rents for consideration and may include Council Tax Reduction Scheme proposals. Cabinet may also consider the outcome of consultation on proposed mid-year changes to fees and charges.	All		23 December			26 February 2026 - adoption	Cllr Eddie Lavery - Finance & Transformation	All	Andy Goodwin	Steve Muldoon	Public
92	Care Strategy for Children and Care Experienced Young People	The Cabinet Member will consider approval of a strategy for improving outcomes for children in care and care experienced young people in Hillingdon. It will set out the Council's statutory responsibilities, local priorities, and proposed actions to strengthen support, stability, and transition pathways, demonstrating the Council's commitment to providing the highest level of care, support, and opportunities for young individuals who have experienced the care system.	N/A			December			Cllr Susan O'Brien - Children, Families & Education	Children, Families & Education	Poppy Reddy	Julie Kelly	Public
47	Pathways for Young People	Cabinet Members will consider procurement decisions regarding existing arrangements for Staying Close and Supported Accommodation Provision for young people.	N/A			December			Cllr Susan O'Brien - Children, Families & Education	Children, Families & Education	Alex Coman / Sally Offin	Julie Kelly	Private (3)
JANUARY 2026													
103	Provision of Vouchers including Food and Essential Goods Support Scheme	Cabinet will be asked to consider the award of a contract to continue the provision of vouchers (including food and essential goods) designed to support low-income households and eligible households within Hillingdon, which is fully Government funded.	N/A	NEW ITEM	15 January				Cllr Susan O'Brien - Children, Families & Education	Children, Families & Education	Tracie Bushell / Allison Mayo	Dan Kennedy	Private (3)

Ref	Business Item	Further information	Ward(s)	NEW ITEM	Decision-Maker				Cabinet Member Lead & Officers				Status
					CABINET meeting	Cabinet Member	Shareholder Committee	Full COUNCIL	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Report Author	Corporate Director Responsible	
102	Consultation on lowering the age range of Whiteheath Infant School	This relates to a decision on whether to approve the proposal that the age range of Whiteheath Infant School can be lowered, so that they are able to offer places for two year olds. Should there be no representations, this matter can be determined by the Cabinet Member instead.	Ruislip		15 January				Cllr Susan O'Brien - Children, Families & Education	Children, Families & Education	Kathryn Angelini / Philip Ryan	Julie Kelly	Public
SI	Public Preview of matters to be considered in private	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private and confidential matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		15 January				TBC	TBC	Democratic Services		Public
SI	Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		15 January				TBC	TBC	Democratic Services		Public
84 Page 155	Local Development Scheme	The Council is required to update its Local Development Scheme (LDS). A LDS is required under section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. This must specify the development plan documents (incl. Local Plan) which, when prepared, will comprise part of the development plan for the area. Full Council will receive an updated plan for consideration after Cabinet's recommendation.	All		15 January			22 January 2026	Cllr Steve Tuckwell - Planning, Housing & Growth	N/A	Gavin Polkinghorn	Dan Kennedy	Public
SI	Audit Committee Annual Report	The Audit Committee is required to submit an annual report to Council outlining the Committee's activities over the previous year. This report summarises the work of the Audit Committee and how it has undertaken its responsibilities in respect of: Internal Audit, External Audit, Counter Fraud, Risk Management and the Financial reporting process of the Statement of Accounts.	N/A					22 January 2026	N/A	N/A	Democratic Services / Claire Baker	Steve Muldoon	Public

Ref	Business Item	Further information	Ward(s)	NEW ITEM	Decision-Maker				Cabinet Member Lead & Officers				Status
					CABINET meeting	Cabinet Member	Shareholder Committee	Full COUNCIL	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Report Author	Corporate Director Responsible	Public or Private (with reason)
SI	Programme of Meetings for the next Municipal Year	Each year the full Council agrees the programme of meetings for the ensuing Municipal Year, setting out the dates and times of Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings.	N/A					22 January 2026	N/A	N/A	Lloyd White		Public
SI	Council Tax-Base and Business Rates Forecast 2026/27	This report sets out the proposed Council Taxbase and Business Rates Forecast for the forthcoming financial year and in accordance with the legislation for approval by the full Council. The Council is required to calculate both its Council Taxbase as at 30 November 2023 and the Business Rates forecast for the forthcoming year by the end of January.	All					22 January 2026	NA	N/A	Andy Goodwin	Steve Muldoon	Public
FEBRUARY 2026													
108 Page 156	Outcomes of the proposal to reduce the Published Admissions Number of Field End Infant School	Cabinet will receive a report to determine whether to approve the proposal to reduce the Published Admissions Number (PAN) for Field End Infant School from 90 (three-form entry) to 60 (two-form entry), in order to better align with local demand. Cabinet will also be updated on consultations of non-community Schools, including Field End Junior School's own consultation as an academy, regarding their proposal to reduce PAN from 90 to 60, for September 2027. If there are no objections to this proposal, the Cabinet Member instead may determine this under delegated authority.	South Ruislip	NEW ITEM	19 February				Cllr Susan O'Brien - Children, Families & Education	Children, Families & Education	James Rogers / Abi Preston	Julie Kelly	Public
SI	Public Preview of matters to be considered in private	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private and confidential matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		19 February				TBC	TBC	Democratic Services		Public
SI	Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		19 February				TBC	TBC	Democratic Services		Public

Ref	Business Item	Further information	Ward(s)	NEW ITEM	Decision-Maker				Cabinet Member Lead & Officers				Status
					CABINET meeting	Cabinet Member	Shareholder Committee	Full COUNCIL	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Report Author	Corporate Director Responsible	Public or Private (with reason)
SI	2026/27 Budget and Future Medium-Term Financial Strategy (BUDGET FRAMEWORK)	Following consultation, this report will set out the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), which includes the draft General Fund reserve budget and capital programme for 2026/27 for consultation, along with indicative projections for the following four years. This will also include the HRA rents for consideration and any proposals for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.	All		19 February			26 February 2026 - adoption	Cllr Ian Edwards - Leader of the Council / Cllr Eddie Lavery - Finance & Transformation	All	Andy Goodwin	Steve Muldoon	Public
93	Stronger Families / Family Help Strategy	The Cabinet Member will consider a strategy which aligns with national reforms and aims to enhance operational effectiveness, modernise practices, and ensure the service remains responsive to the needs of children and families across the borough. A significant part of this transformation is the redesign of the Stronger Families Early Help service, driven by the introduction of the Family Help model. This model promotes early and effective intervention, seamless multi-agency collaboration, empowerment of families, improved access to support services, and a child-centred approach.	N/A			February			Cllr Susan O'Brien - Children, Families & Education	Children, Families & Education	Antony Madden / Vali Danciu	Julie Kelly	
23	Biannual Performance Report	Following Cabinet's recommendation, Council will receive for information, the Council's annual report performance report which will have also been scrutinised by select committees.	N/A					26 February 2026	Cllr Eddie Lavery / All Cabinet Members	All	Ian Kavanagh	Matthew Wallbridge	Public
SI	Members' Allowances 2026/27	The Council is required to undertake an annual re-adoption of its Allowances Scheme and, in doing so give due regard to the recommendations made by the report of the Independent Panel on the Remuneration of Councillors in London.	All					26 February 2026	N/A	N/A	Lloyd White		Public

					Decision-Maker				Cabinet Member Lead & Officers				Status
Ref	Business Item	Further information	Ward(s)	NEW ITEM	CABINET meeting	Cabinet Member	Shareholder Committee	Full COUNCIL	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Report Author	Corporate Director Responsible	Public or Private (with reason)
MARCH 2026													
SI	Public Preview of matters to be considered in private	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private and confidential matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		19 March				TBC	TBC	Democratic Services		Public
SI	Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		19 March				TBC	TBC	Democratic Services		Public
APRIL 2026													
SI	Public Preview of matters to be considered in private	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private and confidential matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		23 April				TBC	TBC	Democratic Services		Public
SI	Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		23 April				TBC	TBC	Democratic Services		Public
SI	School Organisation Plan annual update	The School Organisation Plan, originally approved by Cabinet in 2024, sets out how the London Borough of Hillingdon in accordance with its statutory duty, seeks to ensure there are sufficient primary, The Cabinet Member will consider the annual update to the Plan.	N/A			April			Cllr Susan O'Brien - Children, Families & Education	Children, Families & Education	Nav Minas / Abi Preston	Julie Kelly	Public
SI	Standards and quality of education in Hillingdon during 2024/25	The Cabinet Member will receive the Annual Report regarding children and young people's educational performance across Hillingdon schools, for publication.	N/A			April			Cllr Susan O'Brien - Children, Families & Education	Children, Families & Education	Abi Preston / Michael Hawkins	Julie Kelly	Public
BOROUGH LOCAL ELECTIONS - 7 MAY 2026													
Schedule of Individual Cabinet Member Decisions that may be taken each month (standard items non key-decisions)													

Ref	Business Item	Further information	Ward(s)	NEW ITEM	Decision-Maker				Cabinet Member Lead & Officers				Status
					CABINET meeting	Cabinet Member	Shareholder Committee	Full COUNCIL	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Report Author	Corporate Director Responsible	
SI	Urgent Cabinet-level decisions & interim decision-making (including emergency decisions)	The Leader of the Council has the necessary authority to make decisions that would otherwise be reserved to the Cabinet, in the absence of a Cabinet meeting or in urgent circumstances. Any such decisions will be published in the usual way and reported to a subsequent Cabinet meeting for ratification. The Leader may also take emergency decisions without notice, in particular in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, which will be ratified at a later Cabinet meeting.	Various			Cabinet Member Decision - date TBC			CLlr Ian Edwards - Leader of the Council	TBC	TBC		Public / Private
SI	School Governing Bodies, Instruments of Government and Governors / Authorising Academy Appointments	To approve appointments, nominate appointments and make reappointments of local authority governors and to approve any changes to school governing body constitutions. To also authorise any Member to be a Governor or Director of an Academy.	N/A			Cabinet Member Decision - date TBC			CLlr Susan O'Brien - Children, Families & Education	Children, Families & Education	Helen Boundy		Public
SI	Release of Capital Funds	The release of all capital monies requires formal Member approval, unless otherwise determined either by the Cabinet or the Leader. Batches of monthly reports (as well as occasional individual reports) to determine the release of capital for any schemes already agreed in the capital budget and previously approved by Cabinet or Cabinet Members	TBC			Cabinet Member Decision - date TBC			CLlr Eddie Lavery - Finance & Transformation (in conjunction with relevant Cabinet Member)	All - TBC by decision made	various		Public but some Private (1,2,3)
SI	Petitions about matters under the control of the Cabinet	Cabinet Members will consider a number of petitions received by local residents and organisations and decide on future action. These will be arranged as Petition Hearings.	TBC			Cabinet Member Decision - date TBC			All	TBC	Democratic Services		Public
SI	To approve compensation payments	To approve compensation payments in relation to any complaint to the Council in excess of £1000.	n/a			Cabinet Member Decision - date TBC			All	TBC	various		Private (1,2,3)

Ref	Business Item	Further information	Ward(s)	NEW ITEM	Decision-Maker				Cabinet Member Lead & Officers				Status
					CABINET meeting	Cabinet Member	Shareholder Committee	Full COUNCIL	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Report Author	Corporate Director Responsible	
SI	Acceptance of Tenders	To accept quotations, tenders, contract extensions and contract variations valued between £50k and £500k in their Portfolio Area where funding is previously included in Council budgets.	n/a			Cabinet Member Decision - date TBC			Cllr Ian Edwards - Leader of the Council OR Cllr Eddie Lavery - Finance & Transformation / in conjunction with relevant Cabinet Member	TBC	various		Private (3)
SI	All Delegated Decisions by Cabinet to Cabinet Members, including tender and property decisions	Where previously delegated by Cabinet, to make any necessary decisions, accept tenders, bids and authorise property decisions / transactions in accordance with the Procurement and Contract Standing Orders.	TBC			Cabinet Member Decision - date TBC			All	TBC	various		Public / Private (1,2,3)
SI	School Redundancy Payments	To consider requests for School Redundancy Payments and decide whether to approve them on behalf of the Local Authority	TBC			Cabinet Member Decision - date TBC			Cllr Susan O'Brien - Children, Families & Education	Children, Families & Education	Abi Preston		Private (1,3,4)
SI	External funding bids	To authorise the making of bids for external funding where there is no requirement for a financial commitment from the Council.	n/a			Cabinet Member Decision - date TBC			All	TBC	various		Public
SI	Response to key consultations that may impact upon the Borough	A standard item to capture any emerging consultations from Government, the GLA or other public bodies and institutions that will impact upon the Borough. Where the deadline to respond cannot be met by the date of the Cabinet meeting, the Constitution allows the Cabinet Member to sign-off the response.	TBC			Cabinet Member Decision - date TBC			All	TBC	various		Public
SI = Standard Item that may be considered each month/regularly													
The Cabinet's Forward Plan is an official document by the London Borough of Hillingdon, UK													

WORK PROGRAMME

Committee name	Children, Families & Education Select Committee
Officer reporting	Ryan Dell, Democratic Services
Papers with report	Appendix A – Work Programme
Ward	All

HEADLINES

To enable the Committee to note future meeting dates and to forward plan its work for the current municipal year.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Children, Families & Education Select Committee considers the report and agrees any amendments.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The Committee's meetings will start at 19:00 and the witnesses attending each of the meetings may include representatives from external organisations, some of whom travel from outside of the Borough. Forthcoming meeting dates are as follows:

Meeting Date	Room
05 February 2026	CR6
12 March 2026	CR6
14 April 2026	CR6

PERFORMANCE DATA

N/A.

RESIDENT BENEFIT

The role of the Select Committees is to make recommendations on service changes and improvements to the Cabinet, who are responsible for the Council's policy and direction.

Select Committees directly engage residents in shaping policy and recommendations and the Committees seek to improve the way the Council provides services to residents.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Work Programme

MULTI-YEAR WORK PROGRAMME 2022-2026		2025/2026					
Service Areas	Children, Families & Education Select Committee	November 13	December No meeting	January 07	February 05	March 12	April 14
Children's Social Care	Review: Fostering						
	Policy Review Discussion & Guidance						
	Topic selection/ scoping stage						
	Witness/ evidence/ consultation stage	WS1	WS2a & WS2b				
	Findings, conclusions and recommendations			DRAFT recs	FINAL recs		
	Final review report agreement					X	
	Target Cabinet reporting						X
Children's Social Care	Regular service & performance monitoring						
	Reports/ minutes from the Corporate Parenting Panel			X		X	
	Corporate Parenting Panel Membership to agree + subs						
	Corporate Parenting Panel - update to Terms of Reference						
	Overview of Corporate Parenting Responsibilities						
	Hillingdon's Youth Offer & Delivery Model - review of implementation of Cabinet decisions from Sept. 2023						X
	Care Strategy for Children and Care Experienced Young People	X					
	Stronger Families/ Family Help Strategy				X		
	Youth Justice Service Strategy 2024-2029 (& update)				X		
	Families First Reforms and Children's Wellbeing & Schools Bill			X			
	Learn Hillingdon Self-Assessment Review (annual)				24-25		
	School Place Planning: School Organisation Plan update					X	
	Annual Education Standards report (prior to Cabinet Member)					24-25	
	School Admissions update						X
Education & SEND	Hillingdon Music Hub Annual Report					To include in Standards report	
	Hillingdon Local Area SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy for Children and Young People 0-25 Years 2023-2028 (& update)					x	
	SEND Sufficiency Strategy (& update)					x	
	Hillingdon Education Strategy 2024-2029 (& update)					x	
Business Intelligence	Bi-Annual Performance Monitoring	X		X			
Finance	Budget & Spending Report	X		X	X	X	X
	Cabinet budget proposals 26/27			X			
Democratic Services	Minutes of the AGM						
	Cabinet Forward Plan Monthly Monitoring	X		X	X	X	X
	One-off information items						
Children's Social Care	Children's Centres delivery model and Early Years Nurseries - review of implementation of Cabinet's decisions Sept. 2023						
Education & SEND	School Admissions Arrangements - Whitehall Infant/ Junior						
	Move-ins to the Borough (in-year admissions)						
	Outcomes of consultations regarding: (i) Proposed closures of the Physical Disability (PD) Special Resourced Provision (SRP) at Coteford Infant School (ii) Proposed increasing of the age range for the Assessment Base at Ruislip Gardens Primary School (iii) Proposal for some community schools to lower their age range to take two year olds.						
	Outcome of the consultation for the proposal to amalgamate Grange Park Infant and Nursery School and Grange Park Junior School						
	The proposal to amalgamate Harefield Infant School and Harefield Junior School						
	Update on the Dedicated Schools Grant						
	Proposed Changes to Published Admission Number of Field End Infant School			x			
	Outcome of the consultation on lowering the age range of Whiteheath Infant School			x			
Children & Families Support Services	Early help/ support available to young people Services available to low-income families						
Business Intelligence	Council Strategy 2022-2026 consultation						
Democratic Services	Select Committee Terms of Reference update						
	Scrutiny Introduction (Democratic Services)						
External	Witness session on Higher Education - Orchard Hill College						
	Witness session on Higher Education - Uxbridge College						
	Witness session on Higher Education - Brunel University London						
	Place2Be (external witness session on children's mental health)						
	Past review delivery						
Children's Social Care	Stronger Families Hub: 2022/23 - 2023/24						
	Fostering: 2025/2026						
Education & SEND	Adult & Community Learning Review: 2021/22						
	Persistent Absenteeism: 2024/25						

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