

## AGENDA FOR

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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**To: All Members of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

**Councillors :** C Boles (Chair), R Bernstein, D Berry, Chadwick, U Farooq, E FitzGerald, S Haroon, G Marsden, L McBriar, M Rahimov, M Rubinstein, L Ryder and G Staples-Jones

**Other Members of the Committee:** Helen Chadwick (Union representative) Areeba Malik (Youth Representative)

Dear Member/Colleague

### Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee which will be held as follows:-

<b>Date:</b>	Wednesday, 22 January 2025
<b>Place:</b>	Council Chamber, Town Hall, Bury, BL9 0SW
<b>Time:</b>	7.00 pm
<b>Briefing Facilities:</b>	If Opposition Members and Co-opted Members require briefing on any particular item on the Agenda, the appropriate Director/Senior Officer originating the related report should be contacted.
<b>Notes:</b>	

## AGENDA

### **1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

### **2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members of Cabinet are asked to consider whether they have an interest in any of the matters of the Agenda and, if so, to formally declare that interest.

### **3 MINUTES** *(Pages 3 - 8)*

Minutes from the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2024 are attached for approval.

### **4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

A period of 30 minutes has been set aside for members of the public to ask questions on the agenda for tonight's meeting.

### **5 MEMBER QUESTIONS**

A period of up to 15 minutes will be allocated for questions and supplementary questions from members of the Council who are not members of the committee. This period may be varied at the discretion of the chair.

### **6 SEND UPDATE** *(Pages 9 - 12)*

Report from the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People attached.

### **7 IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE** *(Pages 13 - 20)*

Report from the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People attached.

### **8 EARLY YEARS SUFFICIENCY UPDATE** *(Pages 21 - 24)*

Report from the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People attached.

### **9 URGENT BUSINESS**

Any other business which by reason of special circumstances the Chair agrees may be considered as a matter of urgency.

**Minutes of:** CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Date of Meeting:** 7 November 2024

**Present:** Councillor C Boles (in the Chair)  
Councillors R Bernstein, D Berry, U Farooq, E FitzGerald,  
S Haroon, G Marsden, L McBriar, M Rahimov, L Ryder and  
G Staples-Jones

**Also in attendance:** Helen Chadwick (Union Representative NAHT) Councillor  
L Smith (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and  
Young People) and Councillor T Tariq (Deputy Leader and  
Cabinet Member, Health and Adult Care) Will Blandamer  
(Executive Director Health and Adult Care) Jeanette Richards  
(Executive Director Children and Young People) Wendy Young  
(Head of Service Children & Young People) Stephen Holden  
(Director of Education & Skills) Rachael Stirk (Head of Service  
Children and Young People) Robert Arrowsmith (Head of  
Strategy, Assurance and Reform)

**Public Attendance:** No members of the public were present at the meeting.

**Apologies for Absence:** Linda Evans (Director of Social Care and Early Help)  
Areeba Malik (Children's Representative)

**31 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies are noted above.

**32 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Declaration of interest was received from Councillor Rahimov, relating to the SEND update and the School results this being due to being employed by Acacium Group.

**33 MINUTES**

It was agreed:

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 17<sup>th</sup> September 2024 be approved as a correct and accurate record.

**34 PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

No questions were received in advance of the meeting.

**35 MEMBER QUESTIONS**

There were no member questions.

**36 SEND UPDATE**

Councillor Lucy Smith and Wendy Young provided an overview of the SEND Report, which includes six priority areas and three areas for development. The focus for the committee was on strategy, identification, and access to health services and support. The aim is to reproduce a local area SEND strategy with input from parents, carers, and young people. Workshops and partnership reviews are planned to develop a draft strategy by January 2024. A new SEND communication strategy has been launched, with a positive response to the recruitment for a SEND communication officer.

The quality assurance of EHCPs was discussed, including the development of a draft quality assurance protocol. The use of a digital tool called Fingers 360 was mentioned, which helps create a baseline around the quality of EHCPs. The importance of identifying and assessing children's needs to ensure they receive the right support at the right time was emphasized. The local authority is committed to the inclusion of all children with additional needs and has developed a graduated support approach.

An inclusion support system has been set up where schools can access support through an email inbox, guaranteeing contact from the inclusion and outreach services within the next working day. This system aims to support children at risk of permanent exclusion and those presenting risk-taking behaviours.

Will Blandamer provided an overview of the NHS partnership's efforts to improve SEND arrangements. Progress has been made in reducing waiting times for various services, including speech and language therapy and community paediatrics. The establishment of CAMHS services for 16-18-year-olds was highlighted as a significant improvement. Working with partners at Bury together and Community commissioning group.

Councillor McBriar asked about the completion rates of EHCPs. Wendy Young responded that the goal is to improve the completion rate significantly from the current 21%. Councillor Boles inquired about the impact of EHCPs on educational outcomes. Wendy Young explained that EHCPs are crucial for accurately reflecting the special educational needs of children and ensuring they receive appropriate support.

The importance of annual reviews for EHCPs was discussed, with a focus on ensuring that plans accurately reflect children's needs and progress. The local authority is responsible for ensuring that annual reviews take place and that all relevant partners are notified. Efforts are being made to improve the monitoring and reporting mechanisms for annual reviews.

Councillor Farooq inquired if interpreters could be provided for people who can't understand. Jeanette Richards assured that efforts are being made to ensure all community members can access services, including providing interpreters.

Efforts to improve recruitment and retention in children's services were discussed, along with actions to ensure better representation within SIAB. Ongoing efforts to enhance service delivery and performance management were highlighted, and there was a focus on improving educational outcomes and supporting schools.

It was agreed that:

- The report be noted
- Give an update to the committee of how many annual reviews
- Recommendation to the SIAB board to have a more diverse membership

## 37 IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Councillor Lucy Smith provided an overview of the improvement plan, supported by Jeanette Richards, who emphasized that due to a recent Ofsted visit, certain papers could not be made public. The improvement plan update included a part verbal update and references to resources in the agenda pack.

The meeting included a discussion on complex safeguarding, focusing on Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE). The importance of multi-agency collaboration and the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) were highlighted. The recent Ofsted monitoring visit, which took place on October 31 and November 1, was discussed, noting that it was the sixth and final visit before a full inspection.

The improvement journey since the ILACS inspection at the end of 2021 was reviewed. The council has been in an improvement cycle with regular monitoring visits. The recent visit focused on the effectiveness of the front door arrangements, including the initial response team, emergency duty team, and management of allegations against professionals.

Significant improvement activities were noted, including the establishment of a permanent and stable leadership team across social care and early help. Key appointments, such as the Director of Social Care and Early Help, were highlighted. The council has increased stability across team manager groups and invested in additional social work teams to reduce caseloads and support positive change.

The council's unrelenting focus on the recruitment of social workers was discussed. Challenges in recruitment remain, but efforts include engaging a recruitment partner, launching a recruitment campaign, and offering incentives for successful referrals. The council has also developed a strong apprenticeship program and continues to extend it.

The feedback from the recent Ofsted monitoring visit was overwhelmingly positive. Inspectors noted significant progress since the 2021 inspection, with improvements in the use of thresholds, timely decision-making, and the quality of social work practice. The importance of strong corporate support, including financial investment and IT support, was emphasized.

The council's quality assurance framework was discussed, highlighting the causal link between quality assurance activities and improved performance. The need for consistent feedback from families and children within the audit process was noted. The council is committed to ongoing improvement and expects a full inspection within four to six months.

Councillor Smith asked about the importance of timely annual reviews for EHCPs and whether the council is on track to meet the December 2024 deadline for accurate

monitoring and reporting. Jeanette Richards explained the importance of annual reviews in ensuring that EHCPs accurately reflect children's needs and progress. Efforts are being made to improve the monitoring and reporting mechanisms, and the council is working hard to meet the deadline.

There were discussions around complex safeguarding and how to keep the most vulnerable children safe. Considering strong conversations between our children, practitioners within our complex safeguarding team and police officers with a view to disruption. Jeanette informed the committee that there has been regular communications with the divisional commander at the police since she joined.

The meeting covered various aspects of the improvement plan, including complex safeguarding, workforce and performance management, recruitment and retention, and feedback from the recent Ofsted monitoring visit. The council is committed to ongoing improvement and ensuring that children receive the right help at the right time.

It was Agreed that:

- The report be noted
- Divisional Commander to attend the committee to provide an update

## **38 SCHOOL RESULTS UPDATE**

Councillor Lucy Smith provided an overview of the school results and attainment report, supported by Stephen Holden. There was a discussion about the delay in some national results and the challenges in making accurate comparisons. The overall performance of schools was reviewed, noting that 78% of schools are rated good or better.

In early years, 65% of children achieved a good level of development, which is consistent with the previous year but 3% below the national average. The impact of COVID-19 on these results was acknowledged. For Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, the combined reading, writing, and maths attainment was 63%, which is 5% higher than the previous year but still 1% behind the national average.

For Key Stage 4, the good pass rate in English and Maths (5+) was 42%, which is 3% above the previous year's national average. The standard pass rate (4+) was 63%, 2% below the previous year's national average. The Attainment 8 score was 44.4, slightly below the previous year's result.

The performance of different groups of children was discussed, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and those eligible for free school meals. The data showed strong performance for children with SEND and those eligible for free school meals, with improvements noted in their attainment.

Stephen Holden highlighted the support provided to schools, including 154 packages of support available to both maintained schools and academies. These packages are designed to address specific needs identified through data analysis and quality effectiveness partners. The importance of maintaining strong relationships with multi-

academy trusts and the Department for Education (DfE) was emphasized to ensure accountability and support for school improvement.

Councillor Gold asked about the performance of children with English as an additional language (EAL) and the impact of EHCPs on attainment. Stephen Holden explained that the performance of EAL students can vary widely and that EHCPs are crucial for accurately reflecting the needs of children and ensuring they receive appropriate support.

Councillor Berry discussed the importance of involving parents and grandparents in children's education, particularly in the early years. Strategies to engage parents and support early childhood development were highlighted, including the availability of books and resources through family hubs and early years settings.

Councillor Fitzgerald asked about the impact of parental involvement on children's development. Councillor Smith and Stephen Holden emphasized the importance of early engagement and the role of health partners in supporting children's development during the first 1,000 days of life.

The meeting covered various aspects of school results and attainment, including early years development, key stage performance, support for schools, and the importance of parental involvement. The council is committed to ongoing improvement and ensuring that all children receive the support they need to succeed.

It was agreed that:

- The report be noted

## **39 CHANGING SCHOOL LANDSCAPE**

Councillor Lucy Smith presented the report on the changing school landscape, supported by Rachael Stirk. The report provided an update on the significant shift towards multi-academy trusts (MATs). By the end of the last academic year, over 55% of state-funded schools were working within MATs, with 16 conversions occurring in the last year alone. Several schools are in various stages of conversion, with more expected to convert early in the next calendar year.

Recent changes in government policy have affected the process of school conversions. Schools identified through Ofsted as requiring special measures or successive improvements are no longer automatically issued with a directive Academy order. This change has influenced how the council and its partners work with schools across the system.

The report highlighted several key points and issues, including the measures taken to influence the evolving trust landscape and the considerations needed to support schools during their conversion process. The conversion process involves significant work across various council disciplines, including HR, finance, pensions, property, and legal teams.

The increased autonomy of schools within trusts necessitates a review of strategic governance. The council aims to ensure that all schools and trusts contribute positively

to the local community. The Strategic Education Board, established in 2017, brings together key stakeholders to develop a collective vision and strategic direction for the school system.

Councillor Boles asked whether the council sees schools leaving the local authority to join a trust as a negative reflection. The response highlighted that the decision to convert is ultimately made by the governing body, and the council's role is to present the facts and support schools in making informed decisions.

Councillor Gareth Staples-Jones discussed the fees charged by the local authority for managing academy conversions and why they have increased from £3,500 in 2018 to £8,000. This increase reflects a better understanding of the full costs involved in the conversion process.

The future direction of school conversions and the role of the local authority in holding schools accountable were discussed. The council aims to maintain strong relationships with schools and trusts to ensure accountability and support for school improvement.

Councillor Berry asked about the potential impact of changes in private school enrolment on state schools. The response noted that while there may be shifts in enrolment patterns, the council is prepared to manage these changes and support all schools in the community.

The meeting covered various aspects of the changing school landscape, including the shift towards multi-academy trusts, the impact of government policy changes, strategic governance, and the fees associated with academy conversions. The council is committed to supporting schools through the conversion process and ensuring that all schools contribute positively to the local community.

**It was agreed that:**

- The report be noted

**40 URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.

**COUNCILLOR C BOLES**  
**Chair**

**(Note: The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 9.30 pm)**



**SCRUTINY REPORT**

<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>Children's and Young People's Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>14 January 2025</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	The Local Area Response to the Published SEND inspection and monthly update
<b>REPORT FROM:</b>	<b>Wendy Young, Head of Service – Inclusion &amp; SEND</b>
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	<b>Jeanette Richards, Executive Director, Children's Services</b>

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**1.0 BACKGROUND**

1.1 Following Bury's local area SEND services Inspection by the Care Quality Commission and Ofsted. The inspection team identified widespread, systemic failings in services and highlighted the challenge that we need to do more to improve the outcomes of children and young people with special educational needs.

1.2 The inspection identified 6 priority actions which Bury Council and NHS Greater Manchester ICB are jointly responsible for, along with 3 areas for improvement. As a result of the inspection outcome, the local authority has been issued with an Improvement Notice and will be subject to monitoring visits followed by a re-inspection in approximately 18 months.

**2.0 ISSUES**

2.1 As a result of the inspection outcome, the Bury local area has produced a Priority Action Plan, which we are locally referring to as our Priority Impact Plan (PIP).

2.2 The PIP has been co-produced with stakeholders, including parents and carers and is the strategic plan for SEND, setting out what needs to be delivered in the next 18-24 months with key milestones and key performance indicators. The plan is published on our local offer.

2.3 Support for the delivery of the Priority Impact Plan has been through additional investment by the council and the ICB – this will support the programme management and governance (see below), but also address some of the critical deficits identified in the report, such as the number of EHCPs reviewed and amended each year. The level of investment secured is approximately £450,000 a year.

2.4 Although financial investment has been secured, recruitment has only been successful in part to date, with some challenges regarding candidate quality leading to the use of agency workers to cover gaps. We have also experienced some staff retention issues due to progression opportunities and retirement. It is therefore necessary to conduct further recruitment activity to fill vacant posts on a more permanent basis.

## Governance arrangements

2.5 The SEND Improvement & Assurance Board (SIAB) is accountable to the Cabinet within the Council, and to the GM Integrated Care Board via the Locality Board, which operates as a sub-committee of the ICB Board and replaces the previous SEND local area partnership Boards.

2.6 The SIAB meet monthly (first meeting took place on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2024), and benefits from an independent chair, Deborah Glassbrook who has experience of working with other local areas who are subject to intervention in relation to SEND. The Board include strategic leaders from across the partnership and a Delivery Group has been mobilised with Terms of Reference agreed, with active participation in both groups from across the partnership.

Project Management support has now been onboarded and is embedded to support the programme.

Minutes and papers from each SIAB are provided through the Local Offer Website to ensure visibility.

2.7 Each Priority Action has a nominated lead officer, who will be a senior officer within their organisation. The Workstream Leads provide monthly highlight reports to the SIAB and ensure monthly reviews of the risk register. Reports will be expected to provide updates on activity, performance data and quality assurance findings.

The Local Area Priority Impact Plan (PIP) outlines the high-level strategic plan for SEND improvement, with the performance monitoring, future activity and risk/risk register. In accordance with the reporting requirements of this board and as part of this standing agenda item, Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny Committee will be reported to in the same format.

## 2.8 Monitoring arrangements

Following an Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) SEND inspection, local areas are required to implement monitoring, support, and challenge arrangements to improve their SEND service delivery. This process involves several key steps:

**Monitoring:** Continuous oversight of the local area's SEND arrangements to ensure they meet the required standards.

**Support:** Providing guidance and resources to help local areas address any identified weaknesses.

**Challenge:** Holding local areas accountable for making necessary improvements.

Bury Local Area Partnership remains subject to external scrutiny. These arrangements, to date, have taken place in the form of 'deep dive' activities and 'stocktake' visits facilitated by the Department for Education (DfE).

During October 2024 the Local Area Partnership engaged in a 'deep dive' activity in respect of, priority area 4: Preparation for Adulthood. The deep dive was a thorough and detailed examination to understand the root cause of issues and to identify opportunities for improvement. For this the local area partnership gathered comprehensive data and

evidence to understand the current position, and identify focused areas for sustainable improvement.

This also enabled the local area to discuss the targeted action plan against this area, based on the findings. The deep dive proved valuable to the local area partnership to solve complex matters and ensuring that improvements are based on a thorough understanding of the situation.

A stocktake visit followed this in December 2024. This takes the form of a comprehensive review conducted by the Department for Education (DfE) and NHS England. The purpose of this visit is to assess the progress made by the local area in addressing the issues identified in the improvement notice.

This visit focused on evaluating the actions taken, to date, by the local area to address the specific concerns highlighted in the improvement notice and an evaluation of the evidence collected around progress to date. These visits are crucial to ensuring that local areas are on track to meet the required standards and provide effective support for children and young people with SEND.

Formal feedback and a written letter outlining the DfE conclusions from the visit (and any additional recommendations or actions) will be provided shortly. As at date of writing, the formal report has yet to be received, but the visit was positive, with the DfE indicating that Bury is where they would expect us to be, at this time in our improvement journey and in accordance with the agreed actions. The DfE recognised that the first 6 months of our improvement journey has been mainly focused on the implementation of actions, in accordance with the improvement plan and that the next phase is to ensure that these are embedded into systematic change and are sustained. We also acknowledge that the impact of some of the changes is not yet felt by our schools and other educational providers, but most of all by our parents, carers, and their families. This will be a major focus for us during this next phase and prior to our next stocktake visit, anticipated in July 2025. Informally, the DfE commented positively on the progress being made in Bury compared to other areas with improvement plans.

### **2.9 Annual Reviews of Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans update**

Bury Council currently maintain 2,856 EHC Plans. The Local Authority is responsible for ensuring that each plan is reviewed at least annually and every 6 months for children under the age of 5 years old.

It was previously reported that the local authority does not have an accurate monitoring and reporting mechanism for holding annual review data, to ensure robust reporting of annual review involvements and to enable notifications to our education, health and social care colleagues of when an annual review should be held by, in accordance with statutory requirements. This continues to be a significant area for improvement and focus, in accordance with our Local Area SEND Priority Impact Plan and Project Safety Valve Agreement.

The use of excel spreadsheets to keep this overview, at present, must be maintained while we establish an accurate and efficient use of the system. As previously reported, a data cleanse has been undertaken to update the Liquid Logic System and whilst December 2024 was the anticipated completion date, this has not yet been achieved due to updates to the system that have affected some of the data already held within. This has required further resource to resolve through manually updating the system, which has been identified and secured. Recruitment to these temporary posts is underway and a revised completion date will be established on appointment.

We have adopted a phased approach to the annual review recovery plan, initially addressing the Key Stage transfer reviews, which are due to be completed by 15 February 2025, (nursery to reception and school year 6 to 7 (primary to secondary school age) transfers). There are currently 225 transfers to be completed by this date and we are on to deliver against this deadline. Phase 2 will address the year 11 (end of secondary school) and year 13 (end of college/sixth form) transfers by the 31 March 2025 – this covers a further 253 young people. Weekly tracking meetings are in place to ensure that we are on track to deliver against these timescales.

Taken together, these first two phases of recovery will cover 17% of all currently existing EHCPs. Further phases of annual reviews with different foci will then take place, as the capacity within the team develops. An annual review triage panel currently operates to ensure that any annual reviews held outside of the groups identified in the initial phases of recovery (as outlined above) are reviewed and responded to in as timely manner as possible.

This area remains a significant area of challenge, in terms of the ability to capture accurate data and ensure that we work towards fulfilling this statutory requirement. To ensure this area of recovery progresses appropriately a deeper understanding of the functionality of management information systems is required, as well as the need to build the capacity in the team through ongoing recruitment processes.

### **3.0 CONCLUSION**

The Local Area SEND Partnership is committed to improving services for children and young people with SEND and their families.

The SIAB has received assurance that Bury's services are progressing, in accordance with the commitments set out in the Local Area SEND Priority Impact Plan. There is still a considerable amount of work to be done, and it is essential that we maintain a consistent pace and ensure that we capture the positive impact improvements are having for our children, young people and their families. This will be a particular area of focus for us as we move into phase 2 of our improvement journey.

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#### **List of Background Papers:-**

*Bury Local Area Partnership Priority Impact Plan*

#### **Contact Details:-**

*[Report Author] Wendy Young, Head of Service, SEND & Inclusion*

Executive Director sign off Date: \_\_\_\_\_

JET Meeting Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>SCRUTINY REPORT</b>
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<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>Children &amp; Young People Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>January 25<sup>th</sup> 2025</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>The experience and progress of children in care</b>
<b>REPORT FROM:</b>	<b>Cllr Lucy Smith, Lead Member for Children's Services</b>
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	<b>Linda Evans, Director of Practice Children's Social Care &amp; Early Help</b>

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## 1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The experience and progress of children in care is one of the four main areas for judgement in an Ofsted standard inspection of local authority children's services (the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection; the experiences and progress of care leavers; and the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families being the other three areas). Each of these individual areas of judgement inform the overall judgement on the effectiveness of the local authority.
- 1.2 The body of the report that follows contains an edited extract from the self-evaluation used to support the regional sector-led improvement process, whereby Director's of Children's Services and Heads of Service review the position of individual local authorities and offer each other challenge and support, while seeking to build understanding of where strengths lie across the region.
- 1.3 The annual regional sector-led improvement activity and self evaluation flows through in part into the Annual Conversation of each DCS (and their leadership teams) with the Ofsted regional director and their inspection framework leads.
- 1.4 The self-evaluation is thematically structured under headings relevant to the support provided for children in care and their long term home, but also focusing on the decision-making and oversight underpinning entry into care and a child's journey through family court proceedings.

## 2.0 ISSUES

### Entry into Care and Care Proceedings

The Pre-Proceedings Protocol was reviewed in March 2024 and a case progression officer appointed to track and oversee the timeliness of care proceedings and pre-proceedings; in January we will be implementing a new arrangement for improved tracking of the progress of plans and procedures via a Public Law Outline Impact Board. We need to strengthen our overall tracking particularly in relation to order directions and we have put an interim tracker in place pending the PLO Impact Board being fully embedded.

A weekly Legal Gateway Panel is well established and is chaired by the Director of Social Care and Early Help (Executive Director in absence). The panel is attended by all key professionals with an expected set of reports being provided in advance. Legal Gateway Panel sets out timescales, agrees non-negotiables in pre-proceedings, agrees entry into care (or not) and gives agreement for the range of assessments and services that should be in place. Throughout care proceedings and pre-proceedings each case is reviewed by the service manager to monitor progress and further consider care planning and final care planning decisions.

We currently have 18 (37 children) families in pre-proceedings and 38 (63 children) families subject to care proceedings. There has been an increase in the number of children in pre-proceedings following a period of low numbers earlier in the year. In the quarter October to December 2024, only 24% concluded within the 16-week timescale this is impacted by legacy cases (with 9 families, 17 children in pre-proceeding for over 5 months dating back to May) and staff turnover.

In relation to care proceedings, Bury make a low-level urgent application which supports good planning, and in October - December 2024 most applications were made in a timely way following a decision at Legal Gateway Panel. Over the last 12 months we have seen improvement in the timeliness of care proceedings, in April – June 2024 only 9% of care proceedings concluded in 26 weeks and in October to December 2024 55% concluded within 26 weeks. However, as at the end of December, there are still children from 9 families with ongoing court proceedings that have lasted longer than a year.

The Director of Social Care and Early Help has monthly meetings with the AD for the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) and court matters are discussed, performance reports are shared, and practice issues are discussed.

### **Corporate Parenting Responsibilities**

In the last year the Corporate Parenting strategy has been updated and there has been a refresh of the Corporate Parenting Action plan with strengthened partnership oversight and buy-in. The Corporate Parenting Board has multi-agency working groups focusing on transition, emotional health and wellbeing, and building relationships – all areas picked by our young people as the things that matter most. The Corporate Parenting Board is well attended and co-chaired by care experienced young people. Each report has a child friendly version to ensure they are accessible to young people, and we discuss all reports with young people outside of the meeting.

There has been lots of progress in relation to the Corporate Parenting Action Plan; key policies have been signed off including a new housing policy which reflects a real commitment from the council in support of our care leavers. Recent events have taken place to encourage local businesses to offer work opportunities to care leavers. The number of apprenticeships available within the council to care leavers has significantly increased this year with 10 young people securing apprenticeships, and 7 sustaining those apprenticeships.

In July 2024 National Care Leavers Adviser (DfE) Mark Riddell visited Bury and was positive about the tangible progress made in Bury following his original review in May 2023, particularly our town centre-based care experienced hub/drop in and our refreshed housing policy.

### **Sufficiency & commissioning of homes for children in care**

We use the Placement Northwest (PNW) frameworks to find placements. Through the year we have seen more children placed in residential care, partly reflecting the complexity of need, but partly reflecting the insufficiency of foster homes either provided by Bury itself or within the Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) market. Bury has 48 children in residential care, with 8 of those children under the age of 15 having a care plan reflected that their needs could be best met in foster care.

Bury have been making strenuous efforts to enhance capacity and skills across the year and to limit exposure to the residential market – improving fees, allowances and support for foster carers. We launched our first Mockingbird constellation in March 2024 with a second constellation launching in January 2025. We have also sought and gained cabinet approval to establish two of our own Children's Homes and are supporters and participants in the GM work – Skyline (first children's home purchased in Bury, with support from one of

our Heads of Service), GM Fostering Hub, and the wider GM Combined Authority (GMCA) Regional Care Co-Operative pathfinder.

The issue for Bury is not its overall exposure to the external market in placements – in total, we remain below regional average usage per head of child population in all the main types (residential, IFA and Supported Accommodation and Independent Living (SAILS)), but rather the shift over the past 18 months from being a very low user to being a slightly below average user. In recognition of the centrality of commissioning to the future of children's services and the council, we are in the process of reviewing, restructuring and reinforcing the function, with a new, more robust structure in place by the Spring of 2025.

During 2024, Commissioning arrangements in Bury have been reviewed and this review led to an initial restructure aimed at bringing additional capacity and to support more strategic commissioning arrangements in line with the sufficiency need. A new post has already been created to work with IFAs to build relationships and this has opened an avenue to bespoke family finding events for some of our young people who need to step down from residential care. Alongside this, we have also reviewed our Sufficiency Strategy to ensure we are best placed to meet the needs of children and young people in our care and care experienced young people.

### **The stability of homes for children in care**

The stability of the homes of children in care (how long they have been living in their current home, how frequently they have moved in the recent past) at end December 2024 showed long term stability at 72% with the percentage of all children in care with 3 or more homes in the last 12 months down at 6%. Both these statistics are better than the national average (68% and 10%, respectively) and reflect what has been a growing strength over the past two years (in December 2022, long term stability stood at 53%).

To reduce placement moves a disruption review process has been established so that the reasons that placements end in an untimely way can be better understood and learning shared. Placement stability meetings are held when concerns begin to arise to try and address issues early.

In-house foster care appears to show a higher level of placement instability than IFA placements. However, the reason for this is the fact that emergency out of hours placements are made with in house carers only and are usually very short term until more detailed matching can be undertaken. Implementation of Mockingbird is known to reduce placement disruption and the fact that 2 will have been established this last year should improve in house stability further. There are plans to improve the emotional health offer to children in care and their carers in the coming year through a support team guided by a clinical psychologist helping professionals and carers to better understand the behaviour and needs of children in care and enabling them to better support them, which should also have a positive impact in reducing placement breakdown.

### **Fostering & Adoption**

2023/24 saw a net increase of 7 new general fostering households (14 approvals in total) and resignations were low. Our offer to foster carers was reviewed in 2022/23 and has been well received, with Bury comparing well. The challenge is still to enable more children to be placed with Bury foster carers locally, the use of IFA placements is still considerable especially for sibling groups and older children. Bury has 66% of children in foster placements which compares well with statistical comparators, however we have seen a reduction in the number of children being placed with Bury foster carers (now 43%).

Following the resignation of the chair, the Foster Carers Association (FCA) is being re launched with support from Salford Council FCA and we hope to engage more carers going forwards. Our second constellation of Mockingbird will be launched in early January aimed at greater support for foster carers to support children remaining with carers.

There is considerable regional work with GMCA to maximise the benefits of all GM Local Authorities working together to recruit more foster carers. This is DFE funded and includes a recruitment campaign and a Fostering recruitment hub.

Adoption services are provided by Regional Adoption Agency, Adoption Now. Bury children with an adoption plan are allocated to an Adoption Now social worker seconded from Bury and progress of children with adoption plans is tracked monthly within Bury. In the last year there has been success in placing 6 children in Fostering for Adoption placements which reduces placement moves for children and positively impacts upon the development of early attachment. The biggest challenge is the national shortage of adopters currently meaning that children are waiting longer than is desirable for adoptive families, which in turn can lead to the need to pursue more costly inter-agency adoptions.

### **Permanence**

Permanence planning is considered at the earliest opportunity and is tracked through a system of panels and meetings supported by trackers. We have reviewed our arrangements and will strengthen this by bringing together the different trackers along with ensuring better LCS system (the children's social care management information system) functionality to capture permanence planning and support better reporting.

Adoption Now attend Legal Gateway Panel, so they have oversight of children in court proceedings and pre-proceedings. Children in pre-proceedings are closely tracked and have review points to prevent drift and delay for children in achieving permanence. This will be complimented by a new PLO Impact Board from early 2025.

Children who have a permanence plan of long-term foster carer matching is reviewed and approved at fostering panel. Special guardianship orders are encouraged for children placed with connected carers and where appropriate for those in long term foster care too. 13 children have exited care via SGO's during the last year, mainly at the end of court proceedings, but for a small number from long term care.

Adoption tracking takes place monthly to ensure that permanence plans through adoption are progressed as quickly as possible, if any delays are identified then the Head of Service can escalate the issue within Adoption Now or the service. This has included ensuring Bury children have access to Activity Days for example. Early permanence placements – children placed with a foster carer also approved as an adopter - are high for this last year - 6 since 1st April – reducing the need for moves of home for young children and showing how we identify and tracking children early for adoption.

The IRO role is now having greater oversight of practice, plans and arrangements for children in care and this will be further strengthened via an IRO monitoring approach that focusses on Permanence Planning at the second review for a child in care (at 4 months) and timely and consistent use of the dispute resolution protocol to support their oversight of expeditious care planning arrangements for children and young people.

### **Children with Complex Needs**

We currently have 290 children open with an EHCP plan across Children's Social Care, 99 are within the dedicated Children with Disabilities (CwD) team, 70 are looked after, and 21 are Care Leavers with the remaining children supported across other teams.

We have 3 young people with DoLo and are currently awaiting their transfer to the court of protection, with a further 2 children in court proceedings where we are requesting family court to agree to a DoLo. In addition:

- We have currently had 4 young people heard at legal gateway and we will be filing/issuing applications shortly.
- In addition, we have 45 young people aged between 16 and 18 years old. The number of these young people who may require a DoLo has been brought into question by a Supreme Court judgement that ruled that a 16- or 17-year old's



parents cannot consent to arrangements that deprive the child of their liberty. Prior to this our estimate would have been that 6 further children who have turned 16 years old would need to have a DoLo application made, and these are in progress. We will be seeking legal oversight on some of the young people within this cohort to ensure that we have no unlawful deprivations of liberty.

For children with disabilities who need to be in care, the CwD team provides the commissioning team with an easy-read pen picture of the child that includes pictures denoting their likes, dislikes and containing quotes of what other significant adults would say are their strengths and vulnerabilities. This is provided to support the prospective placement and the carer's understanding of need and also to gain an insight into the child's character, endearing and lovable qualities, making them come to life on paper. We have recently overhauled all current search documentation to ensure the child is seen first and not the disability. This has been a successful approach in that we have been able to identify placements when there is scarcity for almost all our children with complex needs. We aspire to identify forever family homes for our children, where appropriate, and where this is not possible: robust and well scrutinised residential placements.

We provide respite through short break packages where there is an assessed need. This may be the provision of a sessional activity via Action for Children, The Jewish Fed or through direct payments whereby parents can employ a PA. In circumstances where need is high, we can refer to Cambeck for 28 overnights for families or if Cambeck is unable to meet need we can commence a placement search to identify an alternative respite provision. In these instances, we also have agency care staff that have the training, skills and experience to provide hours of respite where we may judge that a typical PA provision is not appropriate.

For children and young people judged at risk of tier 4 admission or family breakdown we refer to the Dynamic Support Register. This can result in involvement from Barnardo's keyworkers and the Specialist support team. Barnardo's provide a level of respite to allow the family to benefit as much as possible from functional assessment and positive behaviour support which are undertaken. Whilst this is strictly not a form of respite it does allow important space for families to breathe, reflect and change in response to the interventions delivered.

### **Health Needs of Children in Care**

Performance reporting around Health checks and Dental checks points to issues around timeliness (& lags in recording for checks that have taken place through the year). Recently, there have been delays for some children having their Initial Health Assessment (IHA) once they are looked after. IHA tracking is now in place via a weekly meeting with health colleagues and the CSC service manager, to ensure all children who are in the care of the Local Authority have an update to date IHA or review health assessment. The process has been reviewed and enhanced business support is in place to ensure timely requests are made. We are reviewing our processes around review health assessments to ensure timely reviews take place.

Health assessments quality is reviewed on a quarterly basis and now that the Children in Care Health team is at full capacity staffing, this will begin to include a health needs analysis to provide further understanding of the health needs of our children in care. The areas that we know are current concerns (via health assessments and our young people telling us) are dental access and emotional health and well-being support.

Bury Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) have put protocols in place to ensure that our care experienced young people wait no longer than 4 weeks for initial assessment. Children and carers tell us that more is needed to promote this new pathway and to broaden the support available to young people, however carers are clear about how they access emergency support around emotional health via CAMHS. We are also securing additional resource to create an in-house emotional health and wellbeing service (note earlier in the home stability section), and in the interim we have access to CAMHS for

consultation on complex cases. Once we have established our in-house service, we will be able to ensure that they consider all SDQs that indicate concern, to advise on how we best support the young person.

Access to dental services is an issue nationally, which GM Integrated Care Board (ICB) have raised repeatedly with NHS England. Access to dental services for our looked after children is prioritised with 2 child friendly dental practices and a referral pathway if carers/young people are struggling to access dental care.

### **Education of Children in Care and the Virtual School**

The Virtual School has high expectations as corporate parents to support cared for children and care experienced young people to aspire to a bright future. The school-aged Personal Education Plan (PEP) form has been improved and expanded to be strengths based, include more pupil voice, and focus on Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG). All PEPs are individually quality assured, and feedback provided to schools and Childrens Social Care (CSC).

Transition support has been provided by our Learning Mentor, Education Employment and Training (EET) Lead and Inclusion Advisor for children in care and children with Child in Need or Child Protection plans in year 6 (last year of primary school) and for children in care in year 11 (last year of secondary school). This includes additional visits to schools, 1:1 sessions, including Lego Play and support with college applications. A Year 6 Aspirations Day was held in summer 2024, including a visit to Bury College.

Pupil Premium Grant (PPG)+ is being monitored and tracked to ensure it is used to support attainment and progress, including through use of tuition. All year 6 and Year 11 pupils had access to tuition through the National Tuition Programme. Schools are encouraged, through the structure of the target section of the PEP, to fund tuition through PPG+.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities – ensuring needs are identified and support is put in at the earliest opportunity as part of the graduated response. This has been achieved through strategic and direct support to education settings and CSC from the Virtual School SEND Lead and wider team, targeted use of Educational Psychology and development of the Virtual School Speech and Language Therapy offer. One can see the success of the team in supporting children with additional needs through the number of children identified as having additional needs once they are in care.

There is priority for all children in care and care experienced young people to achieve good outcomes at each stage achieved through effective synthesis and use of data: termly tracking of attainment and progress, comparison of regional and national data when available. A priority is to apply this to the Early Years Foundation Stage cohort. There has been a concerted drive to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence and severe absence levels in our cared for children and care experienced cohort. Attendance and suspensions are tracked on a fortnightly basis and reported half termly to stakeholders through effective use of data from Welfare Call and a dedicated Attendance Officer. Term Time Holiday requests are reviewed at Director level with Virtual School input. The approach used to focus on the attendance of children in care needs to be extended to the monitoring and review of attendance to children on Child In Need and Child Protection plans.

We aim to ensure that our cared for children and care experienced young people are accessing Education Employment or Training (EET) not just at statutory school age but post-16 years of age and beyond. We monitor children moving out of borough and ensuring suitable education provision is in place so that the children miss as little education as possible. An intensive and bespoke support offer for 16- and 17-year-olds aims to help them sustain EET, with schemes to promote Higher Education, and bespoke support for NEET 18+ Care Leavers working with VS team.

Over the past year, the Virtual School team have undertaken various continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities, and all members of the team now hold a level 5 diploma in Trauma Informed Practice. Additional capacity has been created in the team through the Deputy Virtual School Headteacher post and expansion to include a dedicated Speech and Language Therapist and an Attendance Officer.

We also aim to train and inform the wider children's workforce. The annual Virtual School Conference now established to promote the education and achievement of all Bury's children in care and children with a social worker: 150 delegates attended across children's services attended in the summer term. A comprehensive training package has been delivered to schools and other professionals through members of the Virtual School team and external providers, including bespoke and targeted training to individual schools and examples such as effective use of PPG+, the SEND Graduated Response, strategies for emotional regulation and regular PEP training for schools and social workers, targeting schools with larger numbers of our children on roll.

Indicators of the impact on the experiences and outcomes of children:

- PEP completion consistently above 95%
- 47% PEPs rated at least "Good"
- No permanent exclusions of a Bury cared for child or care experienced young person but suspensions for 2023-24 at 13.5%, up from 12.6% the previous year
- 16–17-year-old EET rates sustained at 85%
- 2024 Phonics outcomes in line with 2023 CLA national
- 2024 KS2 outcomes (provisional): RWM combined in line with 2023 national for CLA
- Reduction in Persistent absence from 22.5% in 2022-23 to 20.3% 2023-24
- Data for KS4 is not able to be compared nationally yet
- 27% care leavers progressed onto Level 2 or 3 courses end of academic year 2023-24.
- School moves decreased from 11 to 9%

### **Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)**

We continue to participate in the National Transfer Scheme and work in line with the agreed transfer arrangements. We have been able to achieve timely transfers for young people over school age due to placement sufficiency in semi-independent placements offering us suitable accommodation within Bury and GM. Younger children are a greater challenge with the shortage of foster carer homes in Bury and the wider region (only one child is placed with Bury Foster Carers) and this has resulted in 2 children being placed at a distance from Bury, one in Liverpool and one outside the region in London.

Our UASC cohort has risen in number but remains at around a third of the initial nationally expected level (0.1% of the local child population), while making up 4% of the total number of children in care in Bury and ex-UASC make up 16% of care experienced 18- to 25-year-old cohort currently supported by Bury.

Children aged under 18 years are all male and originated from 6 countries, with a third originating from Iran. The current group speaks 7 languages with Kurdish most common. Bury have developed strong commissioning arrangements with a local provider that offers specialist UASC homes and we have seen positive outcomes for engagement in education and training and moves on to independence. This has supported nearly all children to be placed within Greater Manchester, with just one outside the region.

We have revised the internal referral process for UASC children to reduce the impact of change of worker and offer better continuity with all new referrals being received into the Care and Support Service. Since the National Transfer Scheme was implemented, we have seen a decline in spontaneous arrivals with just one within this financial year to date. The completion of age assessments remains challenging, with their infrequency limiting

social workers familiarity, although the Regional Migration Partnership Training offer is available and is used by staff.

### 3.0 CONCLUSION

Despite growing challenges in finding family homes for children in care (both fostering and adoption), there are clear signs of improving stability in the homes for Bury's children in care. We are also seeing greater stability and improving educational outcomes for children in care, supported by a strongly performing Virtual School. The Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking cohort of children is growing and their needs are generally well met and their outcomes positive – something that tracks through the older ex-UASC care experienced cohort as well. We believe that there is scope for further improvement in all respects, particularly in better meeting the pressing emotional and mental health needs of young people and in more proactive planning through to permanence. We will be seeking to address these in the coming year.

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**List of Background Papers:-** [Inspecting local authority children's services - GOV.UK](#), particularly the Evaluation section, part 2

**Contact Details:-Linda Evans, Director of Practice Children's Social Care & Early Help**

Executive Director sign off Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>SCRUTINY REPORT</b>
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**MEETING:** Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee

**DATE:** January 25<sup>th</sup> 2025

**SUBJECT:** Early Years Sufficiency & Entitlements & Wraparound Primary School age childcare

**REPORT FROM:** Cllr Lucy Smith, Lead Member for Children's Services

**CONTACT OFFICER:** Collette Radcliffe, Early Years Service Manager, Children's Services

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## 1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Childcare Act 2006 requires local authorities to ensure that there is enough childcare for parents who are working, studying, or training. This is known as the local authority's childcare sufficiency duty.
- 1.2 Under the duty local authorities are expected to assess the demand for childcare in their area, audit the supply of childcare, identify any gaps in childcare provision and then take steps to address the gaps, as far as is reasonably practicable. The duty is intended to ensure that parents have access to the childcare they need to work, study, or train. It also helps to reduce inequalities and improve outcomes for young children
- 1.3 The early years entitlement to free childcare were previously as follows: a 15 hours entitlement for disadvantaged 2-year-olds; a universal 15 hours entitlement for all 3 and 4-year-olds, with an additional 15 hours entitlement for eligible working parents of 3 and 4-year-olds.
- 1.4 From 2024 these arrangements have been extended to cover a larger group of children and families. Since 1 April 2024, eligible working families of two-year-olds have been able to access 15 hours a week. Since September 2024, eligible working families of children aged nine months to two years have been able to access 15 hours a week. Finally, from September 2025, all eligible working families with children aged nine months to four years will be able to access 30 hours free childcare a week. These changes to the entitlements are a significant expansion in free childcare, with the increase envisaged in September 2025 being particularly substantial: effectively a doubling of hours for all eligible families.
- 1.5 In addition to the extension of early years, pre-school entitlement to free childcare there is also a Government commitment to extending the term-time childcare available to primary school-age children. The intention here is for childcare to wraparound the school day from 8am up to 6pm and be based around the primary school, thereby enabling more parents to work a full day including travel time. This enhanced provision is expected to be in place by 2026.

## 2.0 ISSUES

### Childcare sufficiency and enhanced entitlement

In Bury, in aggregate there are currently sufficient childcare places, pending the September 2025 change. During the Autumn 2024 term up until Christmas, there were no reports of un-met demand through our brokerage service (which works to match up childcare requests with available provision). However, this positive overall picture masks underlying challenges, with available childcare places not sufficiently concentrated in the areas of the borough where they are most needed to meet parental demand, or particular needs such

as Jewish faith childcare and early education places that are not well met within Bury (leading to a number of Bury children accessing places in Salford instead).

Our recent survey of childcare providers shows that, for the providers that have responded to date, only 40% are operating at full capacity, meaning that 60% of these providers have additional space capacity. However, again this conclusion needs to be treated with some caution, as we are also aware from informal discussions with providers that they may be operating beneath their registered capacity because of difficulties in recruitment and retention of staff, or they are based in an area with lower presenting demand.

In Bury, in total we currently have 169 childcare providers delivering the funded entitlements, as below;

- 73 Childminders
- 44 Day Nurseries
- 18 Maintained School Nurseries
- 1 Maintained Nursery School
- 27 Nursery units within an Academy
- 2 Nursery units within an Independent School
- 2 Pre-School Playgroups;
- 1 Creche; and
- 1 Domestic premise with childcare provided

93% of working parent entitlement codes that have been issued by HMRC for children that live in Bury have been validated (the national average is 88%), which gives a good indication of how many places were accessed by the end of Autumn Term 2024. A high proportion of our most disadvantaged 2-year-old children accessed a childcare place in Bury. By the end of Autumn Term 2024, we had 77% accessing a place (the national average is 75%). Increasing this proportion still further continues to be a key priority.

In the Autumn Term 2024 (September to December) 4,628 children accessed a funded place in Bury, broken down by entitlement category as follows:

- 1,101 children under 2 year olds from working families
- 447 disadvantaged 2 year olds
- 955 2 year olds from working families
- 2,125 children accessing a 3 or 4-year-old funded place

The current hourly funding rates for the early years entitlements are shown below.

- Under 2s – £9.83
- year olds – £7.35
- 3&4 year olds - £5.11

The rates will be reviewed and updated from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025, in-line with the National Funding Formula. From April 2025, the pass through rate (the minimum proportion of the funding that local authorities receive from central government for the childcare entitlements that must be passed through to providers) will be 97%, having been 95% since 2018/19.

Bury is as flexible as possible in payments to childcare providers to ensure that they both feel supported and can remain also financially viable, given the financial strain in the sector in recent times.

As noted earlier in the background section, from September 2025, the final stage of the expanded childcare entitlement will be rolled out, with children from 9 months old up to the age of 4, with eligible (working) parents becoming eligible for 30 hours of funded childcare (up from the current entitlement of 15 hours).

The DfE estimate that additional places will be required in Bury to meet parental demand. Using DfE demand projection data and our local supply data, we estimate that we will need 218 additional 0-2 year old places across Bury.

The government has announced two principal means of support for local areas to increase the size of childcare sector. In October 2024, the government announced a School-Based Nursery Capital Grant from which primary schools can bid for up to £150,000 of capital funding. The funding is for capital expenditure to repurpose spare space within the school building to create or expand nursery provision. This new funding stream sits alongside previous Childcare Expansion Capital Grant funding announced in November 2023 to support local authorities in increasing both childcare provision for pre-school age children and for wraparound childcare provided by primary schools (see section below).

Bury is supporting 4 applications from primary schools for the School-Based Nursery Grant, which are designed to create an additional 25 places for children aged 2 by September 2025, along with a further 58 places for 3 and 4 year old children. Should these applications be approved by the DfE, we will need a further 193 0 to 2 year old places, based on our projection.

To support the development of these additional additional places we continue to work with our childcare providers and will do throughout 2025. There has already been interest in expansion using the Capital Grant funding provided by central government to the Local Authority , but again many of those expressing interest are in areas with sufficient places already. During the coming year, we will seek to focus our Capital Grant Funding on the areas of where additional places are likely to be most needed: East, West and North and East Radcliffe. We will complete our revised Childcare Sufficiency Assessment by the end of January 2025, which will give us a mor granular understanding of the supply and demand of childcare places across Bury.

To kickstart growth in the sector and develop new childcare places, we are offering support for new and proposed provision including childminders, including delivering childminder briefing sessions for those interested in becoming a childminder. We have 6 prospective childminders booked to attend to date.

### **Wraparound Childcare Programme for primary school age children**

As noted earlier, running in tandem with the increase in the entitlement and uptake of pre-school childcare places, there is the related ambition that by 2026 all parents and carers of primary school-aged children who need it will be able to access term-time childcare in their local area from 8am-6pm, again so that parents can more readily access employment and improve overall labour market participation.

Schools and childcare providers are engaging and so far, we have awarded Capital funding of £43,835 and programme funding of £261,904 to support 12 schools to create, expand or sustain before and after school clubs to help meet our DfE target of creating an additional 650 places by September 2026. 180 additional wraparound places have been created to date and the phase 3 application window for schools will open during the Spring term 2025 for further applications to create new places.

## **3.0 CONCLUSION**

The aims of this policy were widely welcomed in the contemporary commentary when the policy was launched in the Spring of 2023, The cost, availability and quality of childcare has long been seen as a national issue and one of the key areas of difference between the UK and other countries in mainland Europe and around the world. It is also often viewed as one of the key impediments to greater labour market participation and a potential means of increasing national productivity and growth.

However, the same commentary also often stressed the challenges that faced the sector in terms of funding and viability and questioned whether extended entitlement addressed these issues sufficiently and, in short, if we move to a position whereby central government is funding most pre-school childcare, if the level of funding per place sufficient to attract sufficient expansion within existing providers within the marker and/or the entry of other

providers into the market to enable the amount of childcare places provided to match up to the free entitlement being offered.

To date, Bury has seen some actual and projected growth in the amount of local childcare provision, however this growth does not yet come close to the figure of additional places estimated using the DfE methodology. A similar situation exists for wraparound childcare in primary schools. The current situation will be clarified further by the sufficiency analysis currently being completed, but it is clear that strenuous efforts to increase the number of childcare places will need to be made through 2025.

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**List of Background Papers:-** None

**Contact Details:-** Collette Radcliffe, Early Years Service Manager, Children's Services

Executive Director sign off Date: \_\_\_\_\_