

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), P Davies, D Duncalfe, U Farooq, E FitzGerald, S Haroon, C Hunt, G Martin, J Sheppard, J Southworth and J Southworth

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:-

Date:	Tuesday, 15 September 2026
Place:	Council Chamber, Town Hall, Bury, BL9 0SW
Time:	7.00 pm
Briefing Facilities:	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.
Notes:	

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 - 12)*

Minutes from the meeting held on 23rd July 2026 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 ILACS IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE *(Pages 13 - 82)*

Reports Attached

7 SEND SUFFICIENCY PLAN UPDATE *(Pages 83 - 86)*

Report Attached

8 FAMILY FIRST PARTNERSHIP UPDATE *(Pages 87 - 90)*

Report Attached

9 NEET (NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING) UPDATE *(Pages 91 - 98)*

Report Attached

10 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:	23 July 2026
Present:	Councillor C Boles (in the Chair) Councillors D Duncalfe, U Farooq, E FitzGerald, S Haroon, C Hunt, G Martin, J Sheppard, J Southworth and J Southworth
Also in attendance:	Ben Dunne Director of Early Years, Education and Skills Wendy Young Head of Service SEND Robert Arrowsmith Head of Strategy, Assurance and Reform Will Blandamer Executive Director for Health and Adult Care Councillor Walmsley Cabinet Member for Children and Young People Josh Ashworth Democratic Services
Public Attendance:	Two members of the public in attendance Kiran Hampson Kiera Delaney
Apologies for Absence:	Councillor P Davies Jeanette Richards Executive Director for Children and Young People

105 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies are noted above.

106 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

107 MINUTES

It was agreed:

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 12th March 2026 be approved as a correct and accurate record.

Matters arising from the previous meeting the chair requested an update. Ben Dunne Advised

Following the SEND Transition Event, a SEND transition session was held the next day to further explore issues raised by attendees. A follow-up meeting then took place with the wider team, including representatives from SENDIAS and the Head Educational Psychologist, to review feedback and consider opportunities for improvement. Discussions focused on how information and support can be more effectively communicated to schools, young people and their families during the transition process.

Members noted that signposting to available support had not been sufficiently clear, particularly for schools and the Parent Carer Forum. In response, work has been undertaken to strengthen communication pathways and improve awareness of available services. The Local Offer has also been updated to ensure information is more accessible and easier to navigate. These actions are intended to support the development of a more effective SEND transition event in future and to ensure that families are better informed about the support available to them.

108 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No questions were received in advance of the meeting.

There were two members of the public in attendance at the meeting who each asked a question

Kiera Delaney referred to the recent Ofsted monitoring inspection and noted that improvement activity had been undertaken across all six priority areas. She highlighted continuing concerns regarding preparation for adulthood and asked what independent evidence officers had that Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) were leading to better outcomes in practice.

Kiera further asked what accountability and governance arrangements were in place to ensure that the findings of the inspection translated into improved outcomes for children and young people with SEND, and how the Council assured itself that EHCP provision was being delivered and adhered to.

Ben Dunne stated that the Council accepted the findings of the inspection and recognised that further improvement was required. He advised that progress had been made since 2024 and that the SEND Partnership Board and SEND Improvement Assurance Board were providing oversight of the improvement programme and monitoring delivery against key priorities.

Wendy Young highlighted that co-production remained an area for development. A draft Co-production Charter had been developed with input from the Parent Carer Forum, and further work was underway to strengthen engagement with parents and carers and ensure their views informed SEND improvement activity.

She added that social care contributions to EHCPs were monitored through statutory reviews and quality assurance processes. Provision within EHCPs was considered non-negotiable, and a range of mechanisms were in place to monitor delivery and take action where provision was not being secured.

The Chair thanked Kiera for her question.

Kiran Hampson asked whether the Committee would agree to allow additional time for public questions if time permits. She also asked how quarterly performance data, including the lived experiences of children and young people and their parents, would be published and whether the Council would commit to making this information available on its website.

The Chair clarified the Committee's procedure for public questions, advising that under the Committee's rules only one public question is permitted per person and supplementary questions are not usually allowed. However, where a question is submitted in advance then a supplementary question can be asked if this relates to the initial question will be accepted

In response, Ben Dunne advised that performance monitoring and governance arrangements are being overseen through the KPI and Governance Sub-Group, which is tracking progress against key measures. He explained that part of this work will include making relevant

performance datasets publicly available. He also highlighted the role of specialist sub-groups, including the SEND Sufficiency Sub-Group, and noted that other priority areas within the Improvement and Impact Plan will be incorporated into the sub-group structure.

Councillor Walmsley emphasised the importance of transparency and expressed support for publishing performance information where appropriate. She assured members of the public that she would be available to discuss any concerns or questions and agreed to follow up directly with those in attendance. Councillor Walmsley also asked officers to provide appropriate assurances and committed to being available for further discussions by telephone or email.

The Chair thanked Kiran for her question.

109 MEMBER QUESTIONS

There were no member questions.

110 APPOINTMENT OF CORPORATE PARENTING CHAMPION

The Committee was advised that each committee is required to appoint a Corporate Parenting Champion at its first meeting of the municipal year. The Champion will receive training from Children's Services and act as an advocate and spokesperson for Corporate Parenting matters within the Committee.

Cllr Walmsley outlined the importance of the Corporate Parenting role and emphasised that the position represents a commitment to championing the needs and interests of looked after children and care experienced young people.

Cllr Farooq and Cllr FitzGerald both put their names forward for the position of Corporate Parenting Champion.

111 CAPACITY REPORT - INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMITTEE TO SET THE LANDSCAPE OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Committee considered a report outlining the current national and local context for Children's Services, highlighting the significant reforms and challenges facing the sector. Members were reminded that the report had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

Councillor Walmsley introduced the item and invited Robert Arrowsmith and senior officers to provide an overview.

Officers advised that Children's Services are currently experiencing the most significant period of national reform in over 20 years. The reforms include major changes to SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities), the Families First Partnership Programme, children's social care delivery models, children's residential care provision, and post-16 skills and youth services. These reforms sit alongside Bury's ongoing improvement journey and present both significant challenges and opportunities.

The Committee heard that SEND reform represents one of the largest national change programmes, designed to address shortcomings within the existing system. Alongside this, the Families First Partnership Programme will fundamentally change how children's social care services are delivered. Officers explained that, by April 2027, local authorities and statutory

partners including health services, police and education providers will be required to implement new arrangements.

The Families First Partnership Programme brings together several strands of work. Under the new model, children and families will receive support through integrated Family Help Teams, with greater continuity of support from early help through to more specialist interventions. Services are expected to become more locality-based, moving away from historically centralised arrangements. Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams will bring together professionals from social care, health, police and education to work collaboratively with vulnerable children and families.

Members were advised that reforms to children's residential care will also have a significant impact. Greater regional collaboration is planned through Regional Care Cooperatives, with Greater Manchester operating as one of the national pathfinder areas. The intention is to improve sufficiency of placements, manage costs and deliver better outcomes for children in care.

Questions and Discussion

Councillor John Southworth asked for clarification regarding the Families First Partnership Programme.

Robert Arrowsmith explained that the programme is an umbrella for several related reforms. A key change is the removal of traditional distinctions between early help and children in need services, enabling children and families to receive support through a more integrated team approach. Family Help Teams will include a range of practitioners, including social workers and other qualified professionals, with services delivered more locally. Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams will include specialist professionals from health, police and education to ensure a coordinated response to safeguarding concerns.

Councillor Martin queried staffing levels, vacancies and savings targets, noting a lack of figures within the report.

Robert Arrowsmith advised that more than half of the Children's Services budget is spent on placements for children in care, particularly residential placements. The Regional Care Cooperative aims to help contain placement costs. The largest financial pressure continues to be the number of children requiring residential care. Officers reported recent progress in reducing numbers of children in care and noted that social worker caseloads had increased from approximately 16-17 cases per worker to around 18-19 cases as demand for services continues to rise. Balancing increasing demand with financial pressures remains one of the Council's most significant challenges.

Councillor Julie Southworth highlighted the need to improve communication and engagement with parents, particularly through the SEND Information, Advice and Support Service.

Councillor FitzGerald asked about the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and the Council's approach to tackling this issue.

Ben Dunne advised that early intervention remains critical. Work is underway through the SEND reform programme and broader partnership arrangements to improve outcomes from early years through to post-16 education. Officers outlined plans to strengthen transitions from secondary education into employment, training and further education, including engagement with the local business sector. It was acknowledged that reducing NEET numbers is a key priority and requires coordinated action across partner organisations.

Councillor FitzGerald requested further information on this issue and suggested it be considered as a future work programme item.

Councillor Farooq asked officers what their biggest concerns were ahead of forthcoming inspections.

Wendy advised that maintaining the improvements achieved to date whilst delivering significant reform programmes represented the key challenge. Anticipated inspection activity over the next 18 months will assess both service performance and progress against SEND reforms. Continuing improvement amid increasing demand for services remains a significant concern.

Ben Dunne added that inclusion remains the central principle underpinning the SEND reform journey. Ensuring a shared understanding of inclusion across all services and communicating this effectively to parents and stakeholders will be essential to delivering successful outcomes. Robert Arrowsmith stated that the primary challenge within children's social care is embedding the new Families First model while continuing to improve outcomes for children. This will require significant cultural and operational change across the Council and partner organisations. Inspectors will be focused on outcomes for children and families, making it essential that reforms lead to tangible service improvements.

Councillor Duncalfe asked whether appropriate systems were in place to ensure standards within children's homes.

Robert Arrowsmith explained that Ofsted is responsible for regulating and inspecting children's homes and has powers to intervene where standards are not met. He noted that there has been substantial growth in the children's residential care market across the North West, attracting placements from other areas. The Greater Manchester Combined Authority is seeking to improve regulation and coordination across the region.

Councillor Walmsley commented that there can be a misconception that local authorities are solely responsible for regulating children's homes. While planning applications may come before councils, quality regulation rests with Ofsted. Councillors were encouraged to share any concerns or intelligence relating to residential provision.

Robert Arrowsmith added that market intelligence suggests there may now be an oversupply in some areas of the residential care market, particularly at the lower end, and there are signs that placement costs may be beginning to stabilise.

Councillor Boles questioned whether achieving the required culture change would prove difficult.

Ben Dunne acknowledged the challenge, noting that large-scale organisational change is inherently complex. A stronger focus on early intervention and more aligned partnership working will be necessary. Officers expressed confidence that the plans and governance arrangements currently in place provide a strong foundation for successful implementation.

The Chair thanked officers for the comprehensive overview and noted the significant scale of national reform currently affecting Children's Services.

It Was Agreed

- The Committee noted the report and update

Actions / Future Work Programme

1. NEETs - Members requested a future report on Children not in Education Employment and Training
2. Families First Partnership Programme - Members requested further detail on implementation plans, workforce implications and expected benefits for children and families and a future meeting
3. Children's Services Capacity and Financial Pressures - Members requested future monitoring of workforce capacity, caseloads, vacancies and budgetary pressures within Children's Services.

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BURY'S LOCAL AREA SEND MONITORING INSPECTION

The Committee received a report regarding the outcome of the Bury Local Area SEND Monitoring Inspection. Members were expected to have read the report in advance of the meeting.

Councillor Walmsley introduced the report, following which Wendy Young provided an overview of the findings and progress made since the inspection. Wendy Young explained that the Local Area Partnership had worked closely with Department for Education (DfE) and NHS England colleagues through regular stocktake meetings and ongoing monitoring arrangements. The monitoring inspection took place in March and the inspection outcome letter was published on 29 June.

The report outlined the progress made against the Priority Action Plan and concluded that improvements had been achieved across a number of areas. However, it was acknowledged that, despite being subject to intervention since 2017, one priority area remained a concern. Work would therefore continue through the delivery of the Priority Action Plan to ensure sustained improvement and positive outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

It was also noted that the report had previously been considered by the Health Scrutiny Committee and that the monitoring inspection should not be seen as an endpoint, but rather as part of the ongoing improvement journey for the Bury Local Area Partnership.

Councillor Hunt noted the lack of specialist provision for young people aged 19 and over and sought assurance that this issue was being addressed. In response, Wendy Young acknowledged the challenges associated with post-16 provision. She advised that work was underway to assess sufficiency across post-16 education and support services. A SEND Sufficiency Lead had been appointed and a SEND Sufficiency Plan was currently being developed. Engagement was taking place with key post-16 providers to better understand local needs and ensure that future provision met demand. The Sufficiency Plan would be brought forward for further consideration in due course.

Councillor FitzGerald highlighted the importance of ensuring that actions identified through both the Children's and Health Scrutiny Committees were appropriately monitored and progressed. It was confirmed that minutes and actions would be circulated and that arrangements were in place to ensure effective oversight across both scrutiny functions.

Councillor Boles sought clarification regarding transition data for children educated within alternative provision settings.

Wendy Young explained that concerns raised during the inspection had related primarily to pupils attending the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) and children who had been permanently excluded. Historic data collection processes within the PRU had not been sufficiently consistent. However, partnership working with primary and secondary headteachers had been strengthened, and discussions had taken place through the relevant forums to ensure that the

PRU could provide greater assurance regarding transition arrangements and performance information.

Councillor Boles also asked for an update on the tracking and completion of annual Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) reviews.

Wendy Young advised that, while performance was not yet at the level required, significant improvements had been made through the full implementation of the Liquidlogic case management system. All children and young people were now recorded on the system, enabling more effective monitoring and tracking of annual reviews. Compliance rates were improving and further progress was expected.

The chair thanked officers for the update

It Was Agreed:

- That the report be noted.

Actions

- The developing SEND Sufficiency Plan to be brought to a future meeting of the Committee for consideration.
- Continued monitoring of progress against the SEND Priority Action Plan.
- Ongoing oversight of actions arising from both the Children's and Health Scrutiny Committees to ensure coordinated improvement activity.

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SEND REFORM PLAN

Members considered the report on the SEND Reform Plan and received a presentation from Ben Dunne.

Ben Dunne provided an overview of the SEND Reform Plan, outlining that the current SEND system is costly and requires significant reform. He advised that the changes proposed were complex and represented a substantial cultural shift across education, health and social care services. The plan had been developed within a five-week timescale and was centred on increasing inclusion and improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND. He explained that the reforms sought to establish a more inclusive education system through a graduated approach to support, incorporating universal, targeted and specialist interventions. He also highlighted the proposed "Experts at Hand" model, which would provide greater support to schools through a team-around-the-school approach.

In response to questions from Councillor Southworth regarding communication with parents and carers, Ben Dunne acknowledged that improving communication remained a significant challenge and priority. He advised that engagement work had already commenced with children and young people through student councils and that four new engagement groups had recently been established. He stated that parents and carers would be central to the reforms and to the development of the "Experts at Hand" model.

Wendy Young added that improved communication across the partnership was recognised as essential and highlighted the importance of ensuring that underrepresented families were able to contribute to service development.

Councillor Sheppard asked what additional support from central government would assist the delivery of the reforms and requested information regarding the number of therapists and specialist professionals required to support implementation. Ben Dunne advised that further information would be provided following the meeting. Councillor Sheppard also sought

clarification regarding the "Experts at Hand" model and whether sufficient capacity existed to deliver the service. Ben Dunne noted that final national guidance had only been published on 10 June and that further work was required locally to determine delivery arrangements.

Will Blandamer advised that NHS Greater Manchester was undertaking work to consider strategic opportunities around services such as speech and language therapy. He highlighted workforce development as a key challenge and identified workforce planning as a significant risk area for the future.

Councillor Sheppard further referred to the Exclusion Strategy and asked how the authority would respond where schools did not engage with the reforms

Ben Dunne advised that approximately 80 per cent of schools were now part of Multi Academy Trusts, creating both opportunities and challenges. He reported that strong relationships were being developed with trusts and that engagement had taken place with 13 of the 14 secondary schools in Bury. He stated that suspension and permanent exclusion rates remained too high and that robust analysis and conversations with schools were taking place to improve inclusion. He reported that schools had generally engaged positively with the reforms to date.

Robert Arrowsmith commented that SEND reforms shared many of the challenges facing wider children's social care reforms, particularly around increasing demand and workforce pressures. He noted that some of the strongest performing authorities nationally were based in London and that inclusive practice appeared to be a key factor in their success.

Councillor Martin referred to the baseline figures contained within the report and requested further information regarding Education, Health and Care Plan numbers and future projections. Ben Dunne advised that he did not have the figures available during the meeting and would circulate the information following the meeting. Robert Arrowsmith added that the reform programme focused on establishing the necessary foundations for long-term change and that significant benefits for families may not be realised until 2029-30. Ben Dunne acknowledged that supporting parental confidence in mainstream education placements would represent a major challenge moving forward.

Councillor Martin also raised concerns regarding the complexity of an Early Years feedback form and questioned whether this may have led to applications being rejected where support was unavailable to complete the paperwork. Wendy Young advised that the form was intended to improve consistency but was not mandatory, as applications could be made through alternative routes. She acknowledged that the quality of supporting evidence could vary. It was agreed that further information would be provided to Councillor Martin outside of the meeting.

Councillor Hunt asked about potential challenges in securing commitment from Multi Academy Trusts to the reforms. Ben Dunne advised that there were currently 14 trusts operating within Bury and that regular dialogue continued through network meetings and headteacher forums. He reported that attendance and engagement levels had generally been positive and emphasised the importance of maintaining strong lines of communication.

Councillor FitzGerald queried how expectations would be managed given the long-term nature of the reforms. Ben Dunne acknowledged previous criticisms of SEND services and stressed the importance of demonstrating commitment through action and improved communication with families. Councillor FitzGerald also noted that corporate parenting responsibilities were not explicitly referenced within the report. Ben Dunne responded that the wider inclusion agenda incorporated vulnerable children and that stronger alignment between SEND services, schools and the Virtual School would continue to be developed.

Joanne Burns highlighted the relationship between inclusion and school funding, noting the significant investment made in London schools over a number of years. She questioned whether schools had sufficient resources and specialist support available to deliver genuinely

inclusive education. Robert Arrowsmith acknowledged that funding for programmes such as "Experts at Hand" was currently time limited and identified the continuation of funding as a future challenge. Ben Dunne accepted that London schools generally benefited from higher levels of funding but emphasised that strong partnership working, support and scrutiny arrangements also contributed to improved outcomes. He added that support would need to reflect the differing needs and contexts of individual schools.

Councillor Boles sought assurance regarding the co-production of the SEND Reform Plan. Ben Dunne stated that while engagement with the Parent Carer Forum had taken place, he would have welcomed greater involvement and acknowledged that the compressed timescale for submission had limited opportunities for engagement. He confirmed that co-production would be strengthened as the reforms developed. Robert Arrowsmith added that the Parent Carer Forum had been heavily involved in specific aspects of the self-assessment process. Councillor Boles welcomed these assurances and stressed the importance of ongoing co-production with parents and carers.

In response to questions regarding governance and leadership arrangements, Councillor Walmsley advised that she had recently taken on responsibility for the portfolio and had undertaken a handover from the previous portfolio holder. She reported that she held weekly meetings with the Executive Director and was continuing to familiarise herself with the issues and priorities within the service area.

The Committee noted the report and welcomed the proposed direction of travel, whilst emphasising the importance of communication with families, sufficient workforce capacity, sustainable funding arrangements, meaningful co-production and ongoing monitoring of the reforms as implementation progresses.

It Was Agreed:

- The report be noted

Actions:

- Officers to provide information regarding workforce requirements, including therapy and specialist staffing needs.
- Officers to circulate updated EHCP data and projections to Committee Members.
- Officers to provide follow-up information regarding concerns raised about the Early Years feedback form.

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URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

COUNCILLOR C BOLES
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 9.00 pm)

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Children & Young People Improvement Plan

Highlight Report

July 2026

Agenda Item 6

Identify and effectively support children and families in need of help and protection

Upcoming milestones

- August - Opening of The Ark Live Well Centre and Radcliffe Family Hub
- October – Begin staff consultation re. FFP implementation
- October – Phased implementation of FFP begins

Effective information sharing to support full understanding of history within the MASSH

Learning sessions taken place with managers and MASSH partners in October to ensure family history consistently taken into account when making decisions about families. We are seeing better chronologies informing decision making with 96% of those records dip sampled having complete histories. Thematic multi-agency audits are scheduled quarterly, and learning shared with the MASSH Strategic and Operational Boards.

Consistent and holistic planning

44% of CIN/CP plans were judged good through our core audit programme in the last 3 months. Joint audits have been completed to provide peer reflection and challenge around quality of practice but SMART planning remains inconsistent. We are taking a more targeted approach to practice judged to require improvement, by holding learning circles on audits that require improvement and directing staff back to training where needed, in an effort to shift more practice from requires improvement to good.

Appropriate identification of the different forms of neglect

Neglect is one of our key partnership priorities for our BSCP. There have been issues with membership and attendance of the sub-group and so it has not been meeting regularly, this was escalated as an issue and meetings are now scheduled. We have seen an increase of referrals where the primary reason is neglect and continue to work with the MASSH Strategic and Operational Board to ensure a robust response at the front door and increased use of Early Help support. We are seeing increased use of GCP2 within Children's Social Care but is used less by partners. A GCP2 awareness video has been produced by the partnership which will be finalised in July. Neglect training is in place and delivered regularly by the BSCP, with 5 sessions having taken place in 2026 and 65 attendees in total.

Private fostering

We continue to raise awareness of Private Fostering via Private Fostering Week (November), a refresh of promotional materials and multi-agency training. There are 6 children formally identified as privately fostered (August 2026) which is an increase on previously reported numbers but remains lower than we would expect. The HoS is part of a North-West Private Fostering Development Group to improve practice.

Identify and effectively support children and families in need of help and protection

Children are supported to access to education

Our **Education & Inclusion Strategy** was launched in November 2025, with a well attended launch event. A Delivery Plan is in place, an Education Board has been established and will meet in September. An Executive Group will support the Board, reviewing all highlight reports and ensuring focused discussion at Board of the key issues where more detailed challenge or oversight is needed. Our Graduated Approach was launched in September 2025 across the 5 neighbourhoods, and school engagement is high (90% regularly attending). This will form the foundation of our Experts at Hand (EaH) offer as part of the national SEND reforms.

There remains lots to do to improve internal **management information systems**. Progress has not been made in relation to developing the Education Systems (Eyes, PowerBI) – this has been escalated to the Executive Director, Strategy & Transformation and agreed as a priority for Autumn term 2026.

We are strengthening support for children with a social worker through enhanced **Virtual School** engagement. A stronger Early Years Partnership is now in place, through a Virtual School Advisory Teacher, who is tracking attendance of CIN/CP children in the absence of access to live attendance data. A new toolkit/pathway is being developed across Children's Services (requiring CSC representation) to address Barriers to Education (previously EBSNA), which has VS involvement. There has been attendance at Teaching Tuesdays to raise awareness of processes, issues and strategies and we will ensure this is repeated on a half-termly basis, focusing on the different areas of education e.g. SEND, Attendance, EHE, CME, Admissions and Alternative Provision. Previously Looked After Children (PLAC) and Kinship Care Advisor has developed different training packages to deliver in a variety of fora and rolled out.

Children Missing Education (CME)

Multi-agency Children Missing Education (CME) Panels are now fully embedded, bringing together colleagues from Education, SEND, Children's Social Care and Health to review cases and co-ordinate timely reintegration planning for vulnerable children and young people. Particular focus is given to those with complex SEND needs, Children in Care, children who have experienced exclusion, and those with medical or emotional barriers to attendance.

Through the refreshed Education & Inclusion Strategy, engagement with schools has increased to strengthen challenge around children who are not accessing full-time education. This includes greater scrutiny of reduced timetables, children receiving alternative provision and the appropriateness of support arrangements in place. As a result, schools are being supported and challenged to promote earlier intervention, maintain educational engagement and secure a return to full-time education wherever possible. Quarterly audits of CME practice provide additional assurance that statutory duties are being fulfilled and that children receive appropriate educational support. Audit findings are reported through senior leadership governance arrangements and safeguarding partnerships.

Nationally, attendance stands at 93.3% for all pupils and in Bury at 93.0% at the end of Spring Term 1. Bury's Primary Attendance is 94.7%, Secondary 90.1% and Special School 85.2% for comparison. The biggest issues with attendance of our pupils are presenting within the secondary cohort year 8-11, however our primary cohort has excellent attendance currently at 95.9% including Nursery, 95.87% not including EYFS. Overall Secondary attendance is currently 75.9% however there is significant variation across age groups, with older year groups having much weaker attendance (year 7 is at 91.5% and yr 8 is 83.4%).

Identify and effectively support children and families in need of help and protection

Elective Home Education (EHE)

Elective Home Education (EHE) notifications are routed through the MASSH to ensure safeguarding is considered at the earliest opportunity. Robust quality assurance arrangements have been embedded, including half-termly audits of EHE casework which are providing assurance that statutory EHE processes and School Attendance Order (SAO) procedures are being applied consistently and appropriately, with decision-making evidenced within children's records.

Practitioner challenge and scrutiny have strengthened suitability assessments undertaken by the Local Authority. As a result, there is clear evidence of improved identification of unsuitable educational provision. Where education is not deemed suitable, School Attendance Orders are issued promptly, enabling children to return to school and reducing the risk of educational neglect. The Children Not in School (CNIS) Panel provides a strengthened governance route for reviewing complex cases, monitoring outcomes and considering escalation through School Attendance Orders where appropriate, ensuring that children's educational entitlement and welfare remain at the centre of decision-making.

As with many local authorities, there has been an increase in the number of children electively home educated, often linked to wider system pressures such as SEND sufficiency and school-related factors. This has created additional demand on the service and has, at times, impacted on timeliness and consistency. There is a continued focus on improving the quality of recording and ensuring that the impact of interventions is consistently evidenced.

This is also a priority with the Education & Inclusion Strategy.

Delivery of Children's Social Care reforms

We will move to a phased implementation of the **Families First Programme (FFP)** in October, with teams aligned to localities, allocation of new work on a locality basis and trialling of new ways of working including new assessment and threshold document, which is pending final sign-off via the BSCP (expected early September). There is some delay in recruitment to partnership roles to support the implementation, although Health are now progressing to recruitment and GMP are part of a test and learn in another GM LA, which can then inform the Buy implementation.

Our first **Best Start Family Hub**, Chesham Fold, officially opened in March 2026. In March 2026, Bury submitted our Best Start in Life Plan to the DfE, setting out a clear three-year vision to improve outcomes for children and families. The recent award of £3.2 million in Family Hub funding for the current programme period provides the opportunity to strengthen and expand the local offer. The funding will support key developments including the introduction of Best Start Inclusion Practitioners to provide targeted support for children with emerging or identified additional needs, expansion of outreach and community engagement to reach underrepresented and vulnerable families, continued development of a high-quality Early Years parenting offer, and strengthening of the home learning environment offer to support parents in promoting early development, language and school readiness.

Identify and effectively support children and families in need of help and protection

Effective work within Pre-Proceedings

Our PLO Impact Board is well established and provides challenge and oversight of the lived experience of children in proceedings, to ensure that timescales are met and actions progressed. Though we have not eliminated delays, we are tracking and challenging them consistently. Compared to other GM LAs, we are timelier in this space. The number of children entering pre-proceedings has reduced over the last six months, indicating that more families are responding positively to support and intervention at an earlier stage. For those children who do enter care, an increasing proportion (8 children as opposed to 3) have first been supported through pre-proceedings, demonstrating stronger assessment of need and risk, improved planning and appropriate use of legal planning before care becomes necessary. This provides greater assurance that children only enter care when all realistic opportunities to safely support them within their family and wider network have been fully explored.

PRIORITY 2

Ensure purposeful and timely care planning that directs proportionate and effective interventions for children and improves their outcomes

Upcoming milestones

- September – revised timeline for practice guidance on direct work
- September – revised timeline to complete procurement of digital life story work solution

Robust, holistic, outcomes focused care planning

Plans remain variable - some do it well, but time pressures can be an issue for those who would otherwise do them well. There has been gaps in reduced Team Manager capacity in this area with long term absence of managers in this area since January 2026 which is a potential factor in terms of signing off plans which do not meet our standards. Our audits of practice relating to children in care show 29% of plans are judged good and 71% require improvement, based on the last 3 months of audits (improvement since 20%/80% reported in previous update). Tangible positive outcomes have been delivered through strong care planning in the past year – children safely discharged from care orders, children kept within their wider family at the end of court proceedings.

Transitional safeguarding arrangements protect children as they transition into adulthood

We are working with Adult Social Care and partners to establish our Transitional Safeguarding approach. In April 2026 it was agreed that 2 areas will be tested: Joint complex safeguarding – subgroup and a task & finish group re planning to test a new approach in neighbourhoods. We attended the GM Transitional Safeguarding event in June and presented our experimental approach.

Children are supported to understand their life story and family relationships

Direct work training was delivered from Research in Practice in April & May 2026, and our WFD team will continue to deliver training across the department as part of our training by role matrix. Practice guidance and tools/exemplars remain under development.

Following some delay, we have now identified a digital solution for life story work, this is in the final stages of procurement – currently with IG colleagues for review and sign-off.

Following the learning from our ILACS inspection, there is more to do to ensure that our practitioners are completing trauma informed work with our young people to fully understand their experiences and ensure their support takes into account the trauma of their journey to the UK. A weekly Unaccompanied Children group takes place at the Care Leavers Hub to provide opportunity for discussion. We are planning to develop our BeeBot platform to provide more information for our newly arrived young people, and we will ensure that user profiles capture their status so that we can monitor usage and identify areas of interest to strengthen the offer. We will work with the monthly group at the Hub to further develop the local offer to ensure it meets their needs.

Ensure purposeful and timely care planning that directs proportionate and effective interventions for children and improves their outcomes

Emotional wellbeing of young people

The service will launch in July with the Clinical Psychologist and 1 social worker in post (second out to advert). In addition, Pennine Care have recruited a Senior Mental Health practitioner (0.6FTE) and Assistant Psychologist (0.8FTE) who are currently being onboarded.

There is a weekly meeting between Service Managers from Family Safeguarding, CASS & Health to ensure that initial health assessments, review health assessments and SDQs are being completed in a timely way, this is chaired by Director of CSC & EH. Completion of SDQs is an issue for children out of area, as other health providers are not commissioned to collate as part of the Review Health Assessment

Children in our care attend school and make progress

Real-time attendance monitoring is in place via Welfare Call for children who are looked after. Alerts to absence or suspensions are picked up daily and the Attendance and Inclusion fortnightly meeting within the Virtual School, ensures oversight for children who are persistently absent or receiving suspensions. Actions to support increasing attendance are discussed and established including direct work with the Attendance and Inclusion Advisor linking with the school, social worker or care placement to identify the barriers to attendance and establish the support required. We will strengthen oversight of the educational progress of our children through a focused monthly Strategic Oversight Group (SOG) via include CYP XELT meetings. Plans to expand the PEP audits to include schools has stalled due to GDPR issues – this will be referred to our DPO for advice, and we will explore the approach in other LAs.

Wide range of home options for children and young people

We currently have 8 foster care households in assessment (June 2026), with 3 approvals since the beginning of the year. Our current number of fostering households in Bury is 61 (mainstream) and 49 (kinship carers). We are recruiting to Step Forward carers and are being assisted by Reconnect.

The end-to-end GM Fostering Hub to be up and running by the end of September and we are fully engaged in planning.

We have been exploring options around in-house Bury Children’s Homes, including short breaks, and while the Council have agreed funding discussions are ongoing with a local provider and there is no confirmed decision.

Our supported lodgings offer has been on hold since the introduction of the new regulations in 2024. Providers are in place, but we cannot use them for young people under the age of 18 without the Ofsted registration. The application process has proved challenging. A completely new application was submitted July 2026 and we have received confirmation this is now progressing.

Dfe Funding has been received for another Mockingbird constellation. We have also begun a 12-month pilot of the Step Forward Foster Carers Scheme. The proposal aims to recruit a specialist group of foster carers who have the knowledge, skills and experience to support children and young people with complex needs who would otherwise be living in, or be at risk of entering, residential children's homes. We are now actively recruiting to these carers. The pilot will initially recruit six specialist foster households to care for six children currently in residential care or assessed as likely to require a residential placement.

PRIORITY 3

Ensure a strategic and co-ordinated approach to providing support for care leavers to improve their outcomes

Upcoming milestones

- Autumn – pathway plan training

Safe and suitable accommodation

Over 94% of care leavers live in suitable accommodation supported through strong partnership working with housing services and commissioned providers. A monthly Joint Housing Panel chaired by the Director of Social Care and Early Help and attended by children social care, adult social care and housing is effectively ensuring the post 18 years accommodation needs of our young people from 16 years are being planned for, met and to oversee support to young people to reduce the risk of home instability and address any issues which may arise.

As part of the council’s approval of housing developments, we are ringfencing a small number of properties in suitable developments for care experienced young adults – a total of 50 units by the end of 2030, across 10 separate developments spread around the borough; and 30 units by the end of 2028. Timescales on some projects have slipped slightly.

We are also working with a registered social housing provider to develop a wider range of available accommodation (14 units) for post-18 UASC care leavers with no final decision on immigration status. We are also exploring opportunities with Barnardo’s GAP housing for an additional 4 highly supported, supported accommodation homes for older children currently in residential care.

Access to health services and understanding of history

Health histories are currently up to date for all young people who have turned 18 and work is ongoing to ensure that these remain timely, where Review Health Assessments fall close to their 18th birthday they are being completed at the same time. In touch case proforma completed by PAs following each visit has been updated to ensure there is a focused discussion around health.

Robust and holistic pathway planning

An independent consultant has undertaken reviews of pathway planning and care leaver services (report pending). This work has informed a targeted improvement plan focused on improving the quality, consistency and impact of pathway plans, strengthening multi-agency involvement and ensuring plans better reflect the voice, aspirations and lived experiences of care experienced young people. Pathway plans remain variable however there is greater challenge from managers, and the new Team Manager will be coaching individuals to improve the quality of plans.

PRIORITY 3

Ensure a strategic and co-ordinated approach to providing support for care leavers to improve their outcomes

Young people have access to education, employment and training opportunities

A weekly EET Panel, chaired by the Head of Service, provides oversight of young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET and drives timely intervention. Multi-agency working between Next Chapter, Connexions, the Virtual School and post-16 providers ensures coordinated support plans are in place. This approach is strengthening participation in education, training, apprenticeships and employment opportunities and reducing barriers to progression. Through the year we have seen the impact of this work with improvement - comparing the position in May 2025 to May 2026, there has been a 4% improvement, moving Bury up to 54% of care leavers in education, employment or training, in line with the national average and the average for similar authorities.

The EET/NEET Plan on a Page (POP) is now in place, and our Post-18 Lead is using it with the full cohort of young people this year. Feedback from colleges is positive and it is providing a better insight re. achievements and support needed. Post-16 EET Lead continues to work with our young people and provide support e.g. taking to University visits further afield, college interviews, buying specialist clothing for courses & job interviews. Post 16 EET Lead re-evaluated to reflect needs of the cohort and duties being undertaken - now Post 16 Advisor. Approval to recruit to an additional 2 Year FT advisor to support transition to post 16 and additional opportunities to be sought.

PRIORITY 4

Ensure effective multi-agency governance, partnership arrangements and support for children, young people and their families

Upcoming milestones
September – first meeting of Education & Inclusion Board

Effective governance arrangements support the children’s transformation programme
The Strengthening Outcomes Board oversees progress against the Improvement Plan and monitors impact. The Corporate Parenting Board arrangements have been recently refreshed (June 2026) to ensure our young people have a clear role and that members are appropriately sighted on the Corporate Parenting Plan. The CPB Operational Board oversees delivery of the Plan, replacing the three task & finish groups which previously existed. Operational Board meets monthly and reports to the CPB Board, with Operational Board highlight reports shared. The social care reforms (FFP) are overseen through a Families First Programme Board, and in July 2026 it was agreed this was a formal sub-group of the BSCP, ensuring multi-agency governance and oversight.

Effective governance arrangements support Education & Inclusion Strategy
Education & Inclusion Board will include stakeholders across health, social care and the school sector to be established. The first meeting was delayed due to local area SEND inspection followed by SEND Reforms activity but will take place in September 2026. An Executive Group has been established which will review the detailed highlight reports from the workstream leads, and will decide what needs to be presented at Board for more detailed challenge and oversight. The SEND Improvement and Reform Board (replacing the SEND Improvement & Assurance Board (SIAB)) will report into the Education & Inclusion Board.

PRIORITY 5

Ensure a stable and effective leadership and management team that enables good social work practice to flourish

Upcoming milestones
Revised timeline of Sept – agree management training programme

Quality of supervision
Quality of supervision has been positively impacted by the introduction of Beam Notes. Social Workers and managers are reporting significantly reduced administrative burden associated with recording, practitioners report having more time and space for meaningful reflection, analysis and professional discussion during supervision. This is strengthening the quality of managerial oversight and supporting more thoughtful decision-making for children and families. As a result, we are seeing improved quality of supervision records, with stronger evidence of reflective discussion, challenge and consideration of children's experiences and outcomes, rather than a focus on capturing notes alone. At the time of inspection, our audits identified 19% of management oversight judgements as good or better, with 16% judged inadequate. More recent audit findings show that the quality of supervision and management oversight in Quarter 1 continues to improve, with 37% of judgements now assessed as good or better within only 2% Inadequate. To improve further managers, need to more consistently follow up on actions and evidence the impact of their oversight of the quality of practice and performance.

Managers driving progress
Heads of Service are committed to observation of supervision, some have taken place however an online template has now been developed (June) so we can track activity and identify themes more readily. We are co-producing a new management training programme with our extended management team. We expect this to be finalised in September 2026 (was April), and once agreed will deliver this through both internal and external provision. The Workforce Board has been reviewed and as part of a refreshed agenda will focus on identified training needs, at an individual level but also team and service.

PRIORITY 6

Ensure a skilled, confident & experienced workforce

Upcoming milestones	
September – decision regarding Beebot AI and Social Work Academy	
Children and young people can build trusting relationships with practitioners	Clear induction pathways
We continue to get a strong level of interest in posts in Bury. Over the past year, we have been more successful recruiting permanent social workers, and this has improved the stability of the workforce and decreased changes of social worker - currently, 65% of children open to the service for longer than 6 months have had the same social worker for 6 months or longer. We have achieved increased workforce stability over the last year, in June 2026 14.3% of posts were covered by agency workers (up from 55% 2 years ago), with a true vacancy rate (allowing for agency workers covering full-time post holders absent currently for maternity leave or long-term sickness) of 11%. Motivational interviewing training is delivered as part of our training by role matrix programme and will be part of the FFP Learning & Development plan to ensure this is trained out across all practitioners (including partners). However audits indicate use of MI is not yet consistently evident in case file recording.	We are developing our Social Work Academy through the Beebot AI app, we have discussed our requirements with the provider and now have a formal proposal – hoping to gain approval in September. We are increasing scrutiny of attendance at mandatory training, with improved tracking in place to enable reporting to HoS on attendance. Induction checklists have been amended to ensure that new to Bury practitioners have their work sampled after their first month in Bury, this is not yet embedded.
	Training to support quality of practice
	We have a targeted approach to delivery of training, although attendance continues to be a challenge; non-attendance is escalated to Heads of Service. Practice guidance is being reviewed to support FFP implementation. There is a tighter approach to closing the loop following audit, with practitioners/managers directed back to training following inadequate or require improvement audit judgements. WFD team also have access to the audit data to enable a targeted approach to practitioner training.

Ensure effective Performance Management, Quality Assurance and Management Information Systems that support good social work practice

Upcoming milestones
- September – Beebot Care Leavers Local Offer soft launch - September – Beebot SEND Local Offer launch

IROs and CP Chairs driving improved outcomes for children
Escalation protocol is embedded within IRO and CP Chair practice, with weekly escalation reports reviewed by Heads of Service giving clear line-of-sight to themes, timeliness and outcomes for children. Warrington SLIP support was delivered in March 2026, focused on strengthening IRO impact, IRO understanding of role within the organisation and importance of scrutiny and challenge and in training was delivered on safe uncertainty and defensible decision-making. Performance management arrangements have been strengthened through review trackers, weekly monitoring meetings and a focus on timely distribution of minutes and follow-up activity. We have struggled to recruit skilled and experienced IRO's which has impacted on their ability to retain a tight grip on practice and planning for children. IRO posts have now been through a job evaluation process and are gradings are now consistent with the Team Manager gradings which will support more effective recruitment strategies and approaches going forward.

Consistent management of allegations by LADO
We have refreshed our LADO training offer to strengthen understanding of roles, thresholds and professional accountability, supporting more consistent and effective decision-making. In addition, we have worked with our LADOs to strengthen the consistency of practice and recent audit activity has highlighted further work is needed. LADO capacity was increased with recruitment of an additional permanent LADO. A new workspace within LCS was designed to support clearer recording, this was implemented in June but some further work has been identified – this will be agreed in August 2026.

Ensure effective Performance Management, Quality Assurance and Management Information Systems that support good social work practice

MI Systems support good social work practice

LCS development continues, with an external consultant recruited to support FFP implementation and also wider improvement priorities. This work is overseen through SMT. Through this resource we have delivered improvements to the section 17 payments process (C61), IRO resolution process, LADO workspace, fostering and adoption.

Beam Notes (formerly MagicNotes) is progressing well since implementation in October 2026, with over 10 templates in use across the service. Dip sampling indicates positive impact on supervision and other recording, although more in-depth dip sampling has been carried out recently with a report due to SMT in August to inform next areas for development. We are also working with other teams/services in exploring potential for efficiencies elsewhere.

Invision VITA is being tested by the EHCP team, to be used to produce EHCPs. Some initial teething issues have been identified, we are working in partnership with Invision to resolve these and ensure the system meets our needs. We are part of 3 NW LAs receiving a subsidised offer under NW ADCS SLIP arrangements.

The **Beebot AI** platform is being developed initially across 3 key areas: the SEND Local Offer, Care Leavers Local Offer and Family Hubs. These are in varying stages of development, there has been some delay in pulling the content together due to capacity in the respective services. This has now been addressed:

- Care Leavers Local Offer is undergoing final checks and should go live in mid-September

- SEND Local Offer is undergoing final checks and should go live in mid-September (soft launch) with a formal launch at the end of September via a schools inclusion event
- Family Hubs content remains under development and we hope to go live in October/November.

Further development is planned once the above 3 areas are live – we are reviewing other LA examples and would like to develop a single front door and our Social Work Academy.

Children's Services Improvement Plan



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1. Introduction

In Bury, it is our aspiration that **all children and young people reach their potential, are happy, healthy and safe and are therefore able to make the best use of their skills to lead independent and successful lives.**

To achieve this, we want to ensure that our services for children are delivering high quality support and intervention, ensuring that we provide the right help, at the right time to keep families together wherever possible. We remain committed to our ongoing journey of improvement, following our Improvement Plan (2022-2025) progress was recognised by Ofsted in our 2025 ILACS inspection: *“far more children are receiving services that are making a positive difference to their lives and helping to ensure that they are safe and well cared for than was found at the time of the last inspection. Leaders have taken an incremental and persistent approach to improvement by establishing effective multi-agency partnerships. Improved services and better outcomes for children are now a priority for the council, and significant investment has strengthened workforce capacity to meet need and has ensured that appropriately focused services are available to support children and families.”*

Those inspection outcomes were:

- The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families - Good
- The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection - Requires improvement to be good
- The experiences and progress of children in care - Requires improvement to be good
- The experiences and progress of care leavers - Requires improvement to be good
- Overall effectiveness - Requires improvement to be good

Five recommendations were made:

1. The quality of plans and contingency planning for children, including timescales for action. (Outcome 3, National Framework)
2. The effectiveness of supervision and management oversight in addressing drift or delay for children. (Enabler 2, National Framework)
3. The impact and effectiveness of child protection conference chairs' and IROs' escalations. (Enabler 3, National Framework)
4. The quality of effectiveness of direct work with children, including life-story work, to gather children's views and understanding of why they are in care. (Principle 2, National Framework)
5. The consistency of decisions by the local authority designated officer (LADO) and the extent to which those decisions are evidenced. (Outcome 3, National Framework)

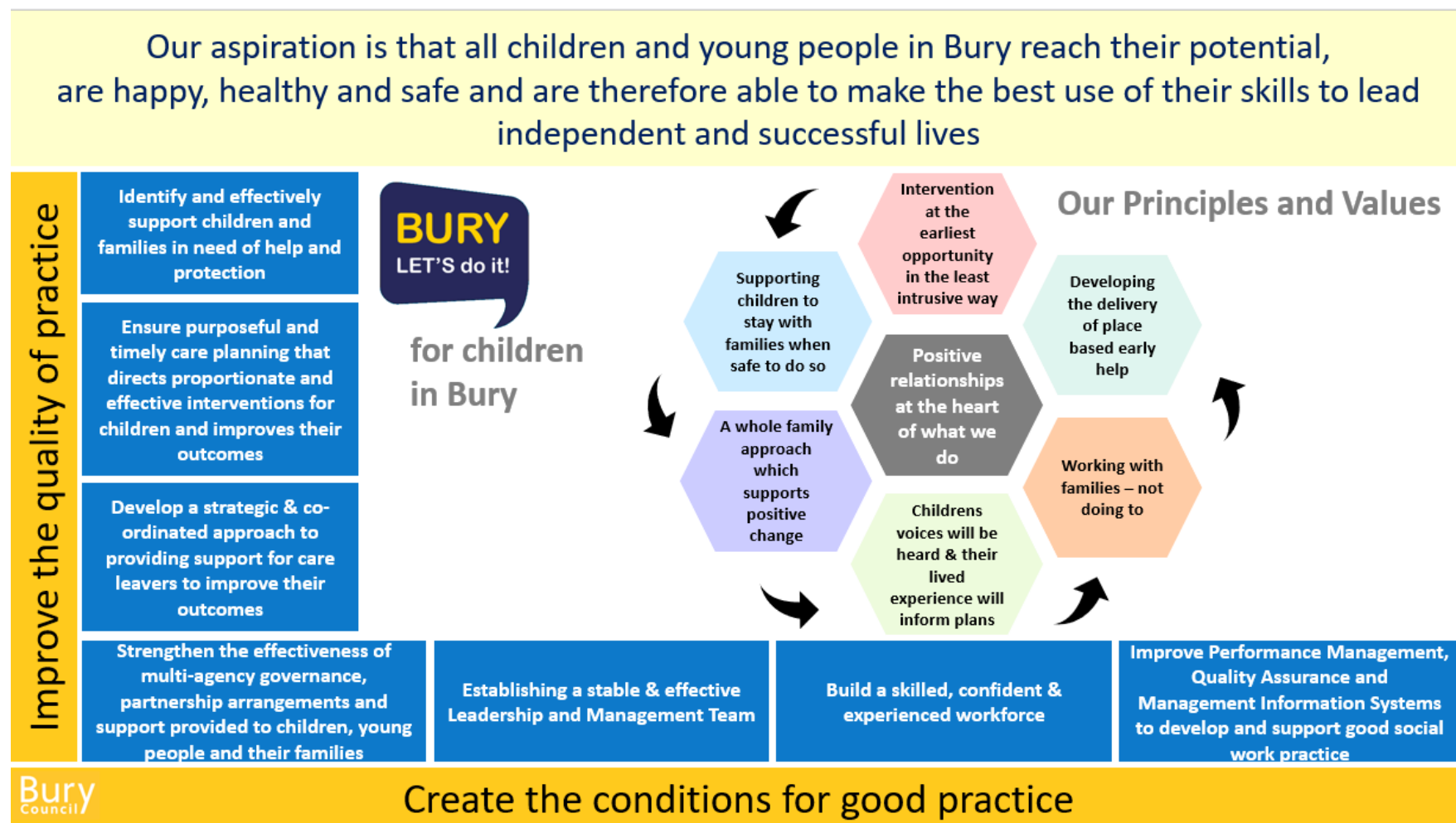
This Improvement Plan sets out our refreshed priorities to ensure we continue with our improvement. However, it sits as part of wider transformation plans as we adapt and respond to the changes ahead including the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill and the Schools White Paper.

We remain committed to working in partnership with the Council and residents of Bury to improve the services across the whole partnership to make things better for our children and young people in line with the Borough's [Let's Do It! strategy - Bury Council](#).

Bury has entered a new phase in its improvement of children's services. The overall message from our recent inspection was clear – we have made progress on our journey, and we are making a positive difference in the lives of children and families, but we are not yet doing it as consistently as we would wish.

The focus of our next phase needs to be on delivering a consistently good service to children and families. We recognise that establishing a more permanent workforce is critical to this aim and we are making positive strides, with agency staff now down to 18%. Robust and regular managerial oversight and coaching of staff is the second pillar of consistency and we have taken steps over the past year to deliver against this challenge: increasing managerial capacity, decreasing managerial spans of control and recruiting more permanent managers. With these preconditions, we believe that a further step-change in the quality of practice will be achieved over the next 18 months, with stronger practice embedding more widely and becoming typical of Bury's services for children and families.

2. Vision



3. Bury Commitments

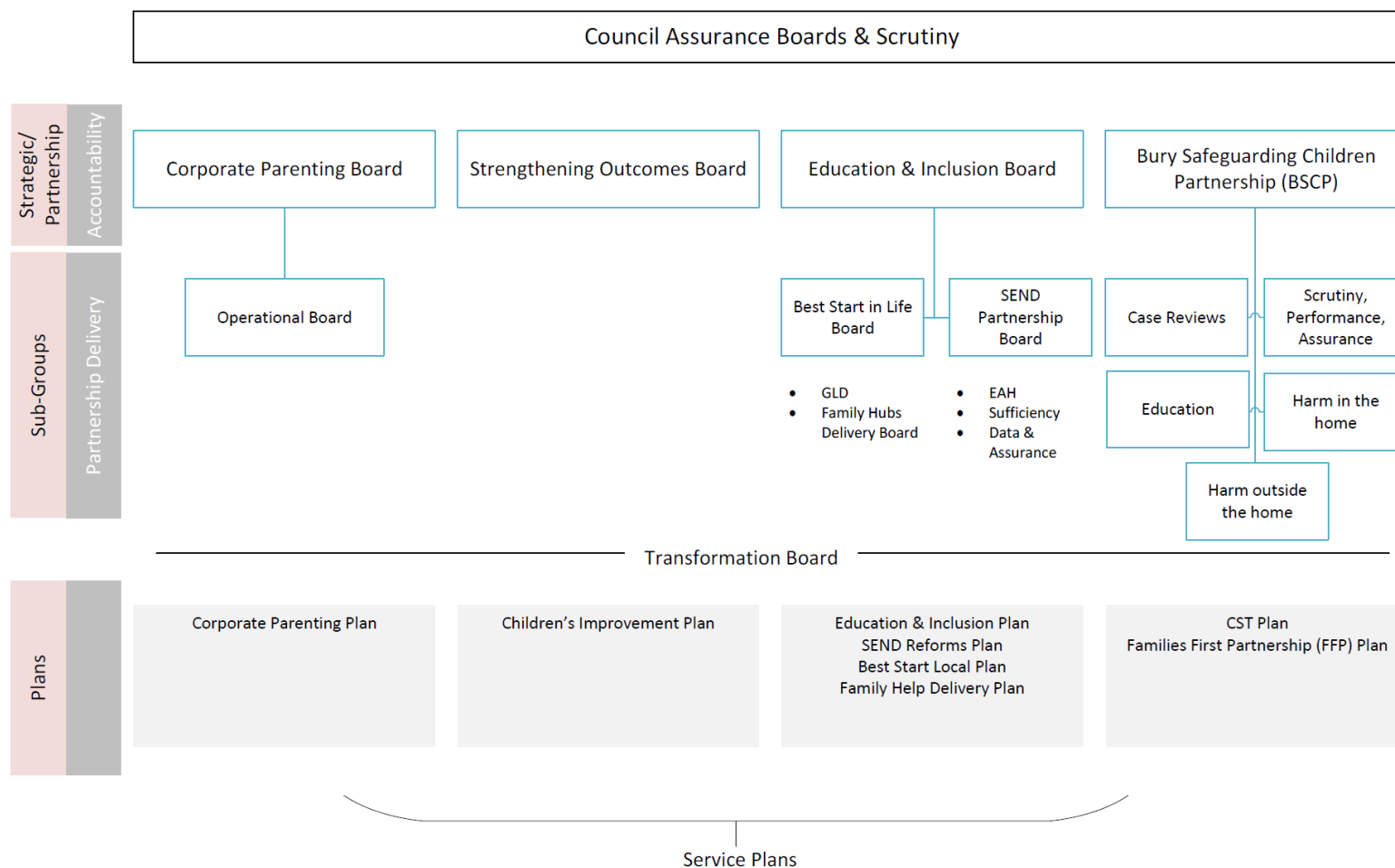
The Bury Commitments represent the cornerstones of good social work practice and have been the foundation for our improvement journey to date. They set out those areas of practice that will have the greatest impact on practice and outcomes for children and families.

Relationships	Impact Chronology	Assessment	Voice	Plan	Driving progress
Practice is about doing with, not doing to We are committed to unconditional positive regard and respect for families. We will develop trusted relationships with our children, young people and their families to support change. Families are the experts of their own lives and we need to empower them through our practice, using a strengths based approach.	Understand our childrens' journey in life All children and young people will have an updated impact chronology. This will consider the impact of key events on childrens' lived experience and development, and will help us better understand their journey and events that may have shaped lived experiences.	Purposeful, analytical & timely Every child and family will have a transparent, research informed assessment. This will be proportionate, triangulated and analytical. It will inform the most appropriate support needed and build on the strengths of the family, enabling children and young people to reach their full potential.	Capturing the daily lived experience We will complete at least one piece of direct work as part of every assessment and plan, and to inform every review. The voice of our children is essential to understand lived experience and what they would like to happen. All our recording will be informed by the child's voice and views.	Co-produced, child friendly, outcome focused All of our children and young people will have an up-to-date, well understood plan that supports positive change. This plan will be jointly owned by the family and the multi-agency group. Plans will be regularly reviewed in line with our practice standards and will show the progress that families are making.	Management footprint & reflective supervision Every practitioner will receive effective, timely and reflective supervision. The focus will be on the progress and impact of the intervention and planning, as well as the growth of the practitioner. Supervision will demonstrate our rationale for decisions made with families.

Permanence from day one for every child and young person

4. Transformation Oversight and Accountability

The following illustration shows the links between the key transformation and improvement plans and our governance arrangements, including key strategic Boards and existing Council assurance mechanisms. This is not a traditional structure chart showing flows of formal accountability between groups, but to visualise the eco-system that sits around the plans.



5. Action Plan

The RAG rating will always take into account the impact of the activity:

	Action/Impact
Green	Action on track (or completed)/delivering improved outcomes
Yellow	Actions have been delayed but progress is now being made
Amber	Actions have been delayed, realistic plans in place to recover but still not progressing at the required pace/Some positive impact but variable – not consistently good
Red	Action not on track, risk to implementation/No impact or very limited impact
Grey	Action not started yet, no risk to implementation anticipated/Too early to measure impact

IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF PRACTICE

Priority 1: Identify and effective support children and families in need of help and protection

Desired outcome	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Evidence of impact/Progress	Impact RAG
1.1 MASSH partners consistently share information that enables us to have a full understanding of family history that supports effective decision making for children and avoids	a) Development sessions with MASSH Managers and partners to consider family history and the experiences of children consistently when making decisions	MASSH Strategic Partnership Board	November 2025	Bury Commitments assessment training is ongoing, all MASSH managers have attended. Consideration of family history is a core component of this training. Learning sessions with managers and MASSH partners took place in October, to ensure family history is consistently taken into account when making decisions for children and families.	

Desired outcome	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Evidence of impact/Progress	Impact RAG
the need for repeat contacts				We are now seeing better chronologies informing decision making. Development sessions with managers have taken place and work within the team is ongoing through monthly service level Teaching Tuesday and learning from audit sessions	
	b) Ensure MASSH Strategic & Operational Boards drive forward effective partnership working within the MASSH that improves our response to children and families	MASSH Strategic Partnership Board	July 2025	Both Strategic and Operational Boards are in place, meeting quarterly and monthly respectively. Partners are represented, with daily Police presence and regular Health presence.	
	c) Quarterly thematic audit to review impact and to be considered as part of multi-agency audit cycle	MASSH Strategic Partnership Board	July 2025	Quarterly audits are well embedded and consider the quality of assessments and family history. Audit activity consistently considers whether family history has been taken. In recent dip sampling activity, 96% of those sampled had clear evidence of family history.	
1.2 Appropriate identification of the different forms of neglect and improved recognition of the impact of cumulative harm upon CYP supports timely and effective planning for children	a) Partners are consistently considering the neglect strategy when sharing concerns about neglect via contacts which ensures they are clearly setting out their worries in relation to the impact of neglect	BSCP & MASSH Strategic Partnership Board	January 2026 May 2026	Neglect is one of the agreed priorities for our Bury Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP). There have been issues with membership and attendance in relation to the Neglect sub-group, which has been escalated to the BSCP and meetings have been scheduled. We have seen a significant increase of referrals where the primary reason is neglect. We continue to work with partners including through the MASSH Strategic and Operational Board to ensure a robust response and	

Desired outcome	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Evidence of impact/Progress	Impact RAG
				decision making at the front door, and increased use of Early Help support.	
	b) Embed use of Graded Care Profile 2 to support understanding about the root cause of neglect, consideration of cumulative harm and parental capacity to change	BSCP supported by PSW	January 2026	We are seeing increased use of GCP2 generally and we are seeking to embed use of the tool at different stages of children's journey, for example child protection conferences, step up from early help (and step down). We are seeing them more consistently at Legal Gateway panel. The GCP template on the system is the original GCP1 and we are looking to have this updated to GCP2 which will improve visibility by allowing us to report on numbers. GCP2 is less used by partners. We have created a GCP2 awareness video for the BSCP to distribute who will then ensure partners are booked onto training; the video will be finalised in July. The training will ensure clarity to partners in relation to the key points in a child's journey that we would expect to see GCP2 when neglect is an issue.	
	c) Deliver neglect training as a core part of induction for social workers and other relevant practitioners	PSW	November 2025	Neglect training programme is in place and a core part of the GCP2 training, and a mandatory part of our social work induction and training programme. BSCP training is delivered quarterly (January, April, September & December). There have	

Desired outcome	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Evidence of impact/Progress	Impact RAG
				been 5 sessions since the beginning of 2026, with 65 attendees in total and approximately 50% of those social care and 25% from across the partnership. We have 239 current staff who are mandated to attend, of this 64% (153) have attended.	
1.3 Effective work within Pre-Proceedings ensures timely interventions with families that are focused on a dynamic understanding of the child's lived experience and reduces escalation of concerns	a) Ensure robust management oversight identifies children who needs to be supported within pre-proceedings in a timely way	Head of Family Safeguarding	October 2025	Challenge to care meetings were introduced in October which take place in advance of any discussion at Legal Gateway. Mid-point meetings are now taking place more consistently, reviewing progress and providing challenge in respect of ongoing pre-proceedings. A final meeting continues to take place to review impact of pre-proceedings and consider the next steps including ensuring timely presentation at Legal Gateway where needed. We have introduced a Service Manager review point at 8.5 months and 14 months for children subject to child protection plans, to consider whether we are working effectively at CP or consideration of pre-proceedings is required. HoS reviews any CP plans over 18 months on a quarterly basis. We are seeing lengthy CP plans reduced, and quicker decisions to escalate to proceedings.	

Desired outcome	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Evidence of impact/Progress	Impact RAG
				Any delays in this are purposeful. We are also seeing a reduction in children going to LGW and are sending the right cases.	
	b) Embed PLO Impact Board to monitor the lived experience of those children in proceedings and pre-proceedings, to ensure that interventions are impactful, and timely decisions are made with active consideration of the child's lived experience	Head of Family Safeguarding	March 2026	Board embedded - first meeting held in May 2025, meets weekly with a different team focus each time ensuring that all children are reviewed 4-weekly (or more frequently as and when required). Board is providing challenge and oversight for children in proceedings and pre-proceedings to ensure that timescales are met and actions are progressed. Though we have not eliminated delays, we are tracking and challenging them consistently. Compared to other GM LAs, we are timelier in this space.	
1.4 Young people benefit from robust, consistent and holistic planning that promotes stronger and timely outcomes	a) Plans for children and young people are SMART and focused on reducing risk, addressing unmet needs and promoting positive outcomes including emotional wellbeing	Head of Early Help & Head of Family Safeguarding	April 2026	Quality of planning for children is a Bury Commitment and mandatory training is routinely delivered across all Family Safeguarding teams. In the last 3 months, 44% of plans in Family Safeguarding have been judged good, 50% require improvement and 6% were judged inadequate compared to 73% requiring improvement and 27% inadequate a year ago. As part of our efforts for continued improvement, shifting the focus from requires improvement to good, a more targeted approach with practitioners and managers	

Desired outcome	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Evidence of impact/Progress	Impact RAG
				(including CP Chairs) is being implemented as part of our QA Framework.	
1.5 All children are supported to access their educational entitlement in line with the 5 pillars of the Education and Inclusion Strategy: • Inclusive • Safe • Effective and high attaining • Collaborative and connected • Sufficient and sustainable	a) Launch Education & Inclusion Strategy to ensure a shared understanding and vision with schools and clarity of expectation in relation to inclusion and safeguarding	Director of Early Years, Education & Skills	November 2025	Strategy was launched in November 2025 with a dedicated launch event which was well attended by schools. A Delivery Plan is in place with an Education Board that will include stakeholders across health, social care and the school sector to be established. The first meeting will take place in September 2026. An Executive Group has been established which will review the detailed highlight reports from the workstream leads, and will decide what needs to be presented at Board for more detailed challenge and oversight.	
	b) Launch the refreshed Graduated Approach and Communities of Practice to ensure greater collaboration and opportunities for shared learning and build capacity	Head of SEND	November 2025	Launch took place September 2025, established the 5 neighbourhoods. Autumn Term network and COPs are now in place with a toolkit and integrated support offer in place to support successful implementation. Parent groups and drop-in dates have been agreed. School engagement is high, with over 90% regularly attending network meetings. Positive feedback is regularly received from professionals who value the advice, guidance and support. This will form the foundation of our Experts at Hand as part of the national SEND reforms.	

Desired outcome	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Evidence of impact/Progress	Impact RAG
	c) Develop Education Systems (e.g. Eyes/Power BI) to remove manual processes and provide real time attendance and exclusions data	Director of Early Years, Education & Skills	October 2026	There is a great deal of work to be done to improve our internal management information systems, to ensure different datasets are linked and can be used to identify children and young people who require appropriate targeted interventions and monitoring the impact of universal support. This has been escalated to the Executive Director, Strategy & Transformation and agreed as a priority for Autumn term 2026. This is also a priority within GM, and we are working in partnership GM partners. By working alongside GM partners, we aim to develop a sustainable data solution that provides real-time attendance and exclusions intelligence, supports statutory responsibilities and enables a more proactive, data-led approach to improving outcomes for children and young people.	
	d) Strengthen EHE assurance protocol and reporting to ensure we have oversight of the quality of EHE children receive and their outcomes, linked to issue of School Attendance Orders (SAOs) if appropriate through Children Not In School (CNIS) panel	School Attendance Exclusions Community Education Manager	July 2026	All notifications of Elective Home Education (EHE) continue to be screened through the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Support Hub (MASSH), ensuring safeguarding information is considered at the earliest opportunity and that appropriate multi-agency oversight is in place. Multi-agency discussions are convened where concerns are identified to ensure risks are assessed and managed effectively.	

Desired outcome	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Evidence of impact/Progress	Impact RAG
				Robust quality assurance arrangements have been embedded, including half-termly audits of EHE casework. These audits provide assurance that statutory EHE processes and School Attendance Order (SAO) procedures are being applied consistently and appropriately, with decision-making evidenced within children's records. Awareness and understanding of EHE responsibilities across the wider children's workforce has improved through targeted training delivered to Children's Social Care practitioners via Teaching Tuesdays, supported by access to EHE guidance and 7-Minute Briefings published through the Bury Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP). Practitioner challenge and scrutiny have strengthened suitability assessments undertaken by the Local Authority. As a result, there is clear evidence of improved identification of unsuitable educational provision. Where education is not deemed suitable, School Attendance Orders are issued promptly, enabling children to return to school and reducing the risk of educational neglect. Annual reviews continue to provide ongoing oversight of the education being received by children educated otherwise than at school, supporting the identification of emerging	

Desired outcome	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Evidence of impact/Progress	Impact RAG
				safeguarding concerns and helping to ensure children remain visible to services. Attendance and Inclusion staff have completed additional professional development relating to elective home education, unregistered settings, educational neglect, isolation and wider safeguarding risks. Training compliance is monitored through attendance registers, providing assurance that frontline practitioners have the knowledge and skills required to fulfil their statutory responsibilities. The Children Not in School (CNIS) Panel provides a strengthened governance route for reviewing complex cases, monitoring outcomes and considering escalation through School Attendance Orders where appropriate, ensuring that children's educational entitlement and welfare remain at the centre of decision-making.	
	e) Ensure robust procedures in place to return CYP to full-time education with a focus on more vulnerable cohorts	School Attendance Exclusions Community Education Manager & Virtual School Head	July 2026	Multi-agency Children Missing Education (CME) Panels are now fully embedded, bringing together colleagues from Education, SEND, Children's Social Care and Health to review cases and coordinate timely reintegration planning for vulnerable children and young people. Particular focus is given to those with complex SEND needs, Children in Care, children who have experienced exclusion, and	

Desired outcome	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Evidence of impact/Progress	Impact RAG
				those with medical or emotional barriers to attendance. The strengthened multi-agency approach has improved oversight of children not accessing full-time education, ensuring barriers are identified earlier and that responsibility for actions is clearly allocated and monitored. Reintegration plans are reviewed regularly, enabling services to respond quickly when progress is not being made and reducing the risk of children becoming invisible to services. To further strengthen early identification and intervention, CME awareness and statutory responsibilities have been promoted through the Children's Services Teaching Tuesdays programme. Training has been delivered to social care practitioners and partner professionals to increase understanding of CME processes, safeguarding risks associated with children missing education, and the importance of timely referrals. This has improved practitioner confidence and reinforced shared accountability for identifying and supporting children who may be out of education. A broader suite of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) has been introduced to strengthen performance monitoring. Measures include	

Desired outcome	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Evidence of impact/Progress	Impact RAG
				successful reintegration within agreed timescales, attendance following reintegration, duration out of education. Quarterly audits of CME practice provide additional assurance that statutory duties are being fulfilled and that children receive appropriate educational support. Audit findings are reported through senior leadership governance arrangements and safeguarding partnerships, strengthening accountability and promoting continuous improvement. Through the refreshed Education & Inclusion Strategy, engagement with schools has increased to strengthen challenge around children who are not accessing full-time education. This includes greater scrutiny of reduced timetables, children receiving alternative provision and the appropriateness of support arrangements in place. As a result, schools are being supported and challenged to promote earlier intervention, maintain educational engagement and secure a return to full-time education wherever possible.	
	f) Strengthen the support for children with a social worker through enhanced Virtual School engagement	Virtual School Head	September 2026	Key areas for improvement identified during the inspection were early years, attendance and previously looked after children. A stronger Early Years Partnership is now in place, through a Virtual School Advisory Teacher.	

Desired outcome	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Evidence of impact/Progress	Impact RAG
				A new toolkit/pathway is being developed across Children's Services (requiring CSC representation) to address Barriers to Education (previously EBSNA), which has VS involvement. There has been attendance at Teaching Tuesdays to raise awareness of processes, issues and strategies and we will ensure this is repeated on a half-termly basis, focusing on the different areas of education e.g. SEND, Attendance, EHE, CME, Admissions and Alternative Provision. Previously Looked After Children (PLAC) and Kinship Care Advisor has developed different training packages to deliver in a variety of fora and rolled out. Resources to support the educational needs of PLAC have also been developed and disseminated, and advice and guidance provided to schools, adoption social workers, carers etc. regarding over 30 children. There is now also a training offer for school staff, alongside a consultancy offer where the VS advisor for PLAC and Kinship care goes out to education settings to help strengthen their practice.	
	g) Strengthen the support for children in care through	Virtual School Head	September 2026	A fortnightly Assurance Board meets to review children and young people where there are	

Desired outcome	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Evidence of impact/Progress	Impact RAG
	enhanced Virtual School (VS) engagement			concerns including in relation to attendance, attainment, PEP completion or part-time timetables. This includes HoS from CSC and ensures a shared approach to addressed concerns. The frequency of meetings has been affected by the long-term absence of the Virtual School Headteacher but these will be back on track from August 2026. These meetings have had a positive impact eg 99% PEP completion as a result (summer term) with 69% good or better – representing a 10pc increase on Autumn term. The Virtual School is now part of the placement decision making process where their views are included on the formal sign-off (PF4). There is a robust training offer, communicated to schools and social workers alike. Social worker attendance is not as strong, however if there are any concerns around poorer quality PEPs the Virtual School contact the relevant HoS so this can be addressed. Virtual School will track gaps in attendance and escalate to HoS to drive a more targeted approach to training.	
1.6 Wider community and professionals	a) Bi-Annual targeted awareness raising to promote recognition	BSCP supported by	January 2026	Discussed at Bury Safeguarding Children Partnership in October where a plan was	

Desired outcome	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Evidence of impact/Progress	Impact RAG
recognise Private Fostering arrangements which results in children who live in Private Fostering arrangements feeling safe and well supported	of Private Fostering and understanding of roles and responsibilities	Head of Family Safeguarding		agreed in relation to wider raising awareness activity. Information was shared during Private Fostering Week in November 2025. BSCP website includes information about Private Fostering. The Head of Service has developed refreshed promotional materials which were distributed in May. Training sessions have been delivered – online multi-agency sessions via the BSCP with targeted sessions for social workers and DSLs. Two online training sessions are scheduled for September led by the BSCP with a focus on health practitioners and hospital staff. There are 3 children formally identified as privately fostered in Bury (July 2026), which indicates that not all privately fostered children are being identified. The Head of Service is part of a North West Private Fostering Development Group, to help improve practice in this area and share best practice.	
	b) Provide a timely, effective and compliant response for children living in Private Fostering arrangements (evident through dip	Head of Family Safeguarding	December 2025	In August the Head of Service refreshed our Private Fostering (PF) audit tool and reviewed the children who were living in private fostering arrangements at that point in time; the audit is now completed quarterly. Audits have	

Desired outcome	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Evidence of impact/Progress	Impact RAG
	sampling/audit) ensuring that their needs are being met			identified that there are delays in completing Private Fostering (PF) assessments and identification of PF arrangements. Training within Family Safeguarding service took place in May and further training will be delivered later in the year for other services.	
1.7 Children's social care reforms transform services to children and families in Bury, ensuring they receive the right help and support at the right time within their own communities and avoid escalation of concerns	a) Develop network of Family Hubs which is integrated into the place-based neighbourhood approach and supports delivery of the reforms	Executive Director CYP & Executive Director, Health and Adult Care (and Deputy Place Lead - NHS GM (Bury))	March 2026	Chesham Fold Best Start Family Hub opened in March, located in one of our most deprived areas. This is in addition to East Bury Family Hub, Brandlesholme Children's Centre, Whitefield Children's Centre and Radcliffe Children's Centre which will be re-branded as Best Start Family Hubs in October. Our first Live Well Centre is soft launching in July 2026 with an official opening on 16th August. Best Start Family Hub Delivery Plan has been submitted to the DfE which will be overseen by the Best Start Board, with the Family Hub sub-group leading on the operational delivery.	
	b) Develop delivery plan for implementation of the social care reforms	Delegated Safeguarding Partners	December 2025	Outline delivery plan submitted June 2025; part 2 of the delivery plan was submitted 18 th December following a series of meetings and workshops with partners. Project support allocated, project plan in place and Programme Board established January 2026.	

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Progress	Impact RAG
2.1 Young people benefit from robust, consistent and holistic care planning that promotes stronger and timely outcomes	a) Plans for children are SMART and capture all aspects of children's wellbeing and support needs,	Head of Corporate Parenting & Head of Safeguarding Unit	March 2026 July 2026	The Head of Service and Team Managers carried out dip sampling including plans at the beginning of the year. This reinforced our understanding that some practitioners are doing this well and we saw good examples of care planning. The lower quality plans corresponded to a small number of practitioners, some performance plans are underway with additional training being delivered to support.	

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Progress	Impact RAG
				Plans remain variable - some do it well, but time pressures can be an issue for those who would otherwise do them well. There has been gaps in reduced Team Manager capacity in this area with long term absence of managers in this area since January 2026 which is a potential factor in terms of signing off plans which do not meet our standards. Our audits of practice relating to children in care show 29% of plans are judged good and 71% require improvement, based on the last 3 months of audits (improvement since 20%/80% reported in previous update).	
2.2 Children in our care, including asylum seeking children, have their emotional health and wellbeing needs met. Their history of likely trauma and the potential impact of this is understood by their PA and is captured in care planning.	a) Hold a practitioner learning event that supports practitioners to reflect on practice relating to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, ensuring there is appropriate advice and guidance for both practitioners and children	Corporate Parenting Board supported by Head of Corporate Parenting	February 2026	February's Service Meeting was a thematic session focusing on the needs of UASC and included a reflection on practice and how we can ensure that guidance and advice is appropriate for our UASC. There is a weekly UASC group at the Hub which provides opportunity for discussion and sharing of worries, and access to services. In June 2025 we consulted with a group of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children to understand how we can improve their experiences in Bury.	

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Progress	Impact RAG
			June 2026	The BeeBot platform will be highly beneficial for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children as it provides seamless translation support. Some delays to this platform launch mean we are now due to go live in July 2026. While the platform is initially focused on the care leavers offer, we will further develop the UASC content and ensure user profiles capture UASC status so that we can monitor their usage to identify areas of interest. We will work with the monthly UASC group at the Hub to further develop the local offer to ensure it meets their needs. All UASC are discussed at Legal Gateway and includes a focus on their emotional wellbeing and any support required.	
	b) Develop in-house emotional health and wellbeing service for cared for and care experienced children and young people	Head of Corporate Parenting supported by Corporate Parenting Board	January 2026 July 2026	Recruitment of social workers was originally planned for January however due to delays in onboarding the Clinical Psychologist, social worker recruitment was delayed to ensure co-ordinated start dates. The service will launch on 13th July with the Clinical Psychologist and 1 social worker in post (out to advert on the second social worker post). In addition, Pennine Care have recruited a Senior Mental Health practitioner (0.6FTE) and Assistant Psychologist (0.8FTE) who are currently being onboarded. Young people will	

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Progress	Impact RAG
			July 2026	have access to Pennine Mental Health support through the team, which includes SALT. There is a weekly meeting between Service Managers from Family Safeguarding, CASS & Health to ensure that initial health assessments, review health assessments and SDQs are being completed in a timely way. The Director of CSC & EH is going to Chair from July onwards to ensure this is prioritised appropriately. We know that completion of SDQs is an issue for children out of area, as other health providers are not commissioned to collate as part of the Review Health Assessment. A review of SDQs will be completed in July to identify themes.	
2.3 Children are supported in a timely and age-appropriate way to understand their life story, family relationships and what led to them coming into our care	a) Commission training in relation to direct work skills and techniques, to be delivered to practitioners, managers, IROs and CP chairs	PSW	May 2026	Research in Practice were commissioned to deliver training focused on direct work techniques and life story work in April & May 2026, with 50 practitioners from Family Safeguarding and CASS service along with the Workforce Development Team, to enable us to facilitate wider training across the department as part of our Training by Role matrix.	
	b) Develop practice standards on expectations of what good direct work looks like,	PSW	November 2025	Tools and examples of Direct Work are continually added to our Sharepoint site for staff to access. Training on the Commitments	

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Progress	Impact RAG
	supported by a range of suitable tools and exemplars of good practice		July 2026	includes a session on direct work including as part of assessment. A Practice Standard focused on Direct Work is going to SMT for approval in July.	
	c) Commission and implement a digital solution to improve the recording of life story work	CYP Improvement Manager	March 2026 June 2026	A task and finish group was convened to consider the options, and a number of providers were considered. An Op Dec has been approved in June 2026 confirming intention to procure Virtual Memory Box as the preferred solution. The contract is being reviewed by IG to ensure compliance and appropriately secure. (July 2026)	
2.4 Children in Care (CiC) make improved academic progress (in line with National CLA data or better) and their school attendance improves to be consistently above 90%	a) Introduce real-time attendance monitoring for CiC via Power BI dashboards to improve overall attendance, with a particular focus on secondary school-aged children, to at least 90% in the Statutory School Age (SSA) cohort and reduce rates of persistent and severe absence	Virtual School Head Teacher supported by Head of Performance & Delivery	September 2026	Real time attendance monitoring is in place for children who are looked after through Welfare Call. Fortnightly tracking meetings are in place within the Virtual School to monitor this attendance. We are able to access real time data for our SSA cared for children, however, will need to re-procure this service for September 2026, and this has yet to be linked to PowerBI dashboards. Delays due to Virtual HT absence, need to prioritise for Autumn term	

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Progress	Impact RAG
				An Attendance & Inclusion adviser was recruited and commenced in post in January to provide additional capacity to focus on effective tracking of identified cohorts – including CIN and CP (who are not included in Welfare Call) - and provide direct support and intervention.	
	b) Strengthen oversight of the educational progress of our looked after children through the Education Strategic Oversight Group	Director of Early Years, Education & Skills	September 2026	A more robust process will be implemented in the Autumn term with a SOG focused meeting taking place through CYP XELT meetings, linked to Education & Inclusion Delivery Plan.	
	c) Reduce the number and rates of suspension within the statutory school aged cohort to be in line with the national level for children in care through attendance and support at reintegration meetings and preventative training - Trauma informed practitioner diploma, whole school and training for senior leaders, identification of and SEND	Virtual School Head Teacher	July 2026	We have trained over 100 school staff on the Diploma in Trauma Informed Practice and there is focused work taking place with schools where there is evidence of less inclusive practice. From the autumn term this will be more closely linked with the Education & Inclusion Strategy and targeting schools. Virtual school advisors attend re-integration meetings after suspensions, to support the young person back into school, whether in or out of borough, offering challenge and support to prevent further suspensions. Our Virtual School Headteacher is in discussion with Virtual School Headteachers in other local authorities to enable joint challenge	

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Progress	Impact RAG																							
				to children and young people placed out of area. Suspension rates are lower this academic year compared to last academic year – at the end of last academic year there were 141 suspensions/253 days lost, this year there have been 127 suspensions/205 days lost.																								
	d) Strengthen quality of PEPs to deliver improved outcomes for children	Virtual School Head Teacher	March 2026	New PEP handbooks produced for September 2026, EYFS and school aged children’s versions complete and post-16 is scheduled for completion in August 2026 – this has been delayed due to delay in recruitment of a post-16 advisor. New PEP format introduced in September 2025 allows for more in-depth reporting regarding SEND, AP and Part-Time Timetables (PTTT), in addition to standardised attainment and progress criteria. The proportion of PEPs RAG rated green or gold is increasing each term: <table><tr><td></td><td>Autumn</td><td>Spring</td><td>Summer</td></tr><tr><td>Completion</td><td>98%</td><td>99%</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Gold</td><td>18%</td><td>30%</td><td>24%</td></tr><tr><td>Green</td><td>41%</td><td>39%</td><td>54%</td></tr><tr><td>Amber</td><td>29%</td><td>13%</td><td>17%</td></tr><tr><td>Red</td><td>4%</td><td>2%</td><td>1%</td></tr></table>			Autumn	Spring	Summer	Completion	98%	99%		Gold	18%	30%	24%	Green	41%	39%	54%	Amber	29%	13%	17%	Red	4%	2%
	Autumn	Spring	Summer																									
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Red	4%	2%	1%																									

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Progress	Impact RAG
	e) Strengthen the Quality Assurance process to ensure that targets on Personal Education Plans (PEPs) are SMART and enable progress to be made through new moderation arrangements shared with Designated Teachers and Social Workers through training	Virtual School Headteacher	September 2025 September 2026	Half-termly audits are taking place, with a new moderation approach to the session to improve consistency of audit and a shared view as to what a good PEP looks like. This has been shared with Designated Teachers and Social Workers. Plans to extend inclusion of partners to the QA process have been paused due to potential GDPR issues, these will be explored further in the Autumn term and we will explore how other LA Virtual Schools have approached this.	
2.5 Children in our care and care experienced young people have a wider range of home options available to them, that support them to maintain critical connections to their family and community	a) Increase the number of fostering households within Bury for Bury children	Director of CSC & EH	July 2026	We currently have 8 foster care households in assessment (June 2026), with 3 approvals since the beginning of the year. Our current number of fostering households in Bury is 61 (mainstream) and 49 (kinship carers). We are recruiting to Step Forward carers and are being assisted by Reconnect. The end-to-end GM Fostering Hub to be up and running by the end of September and we are fully engaged in planning.	
	b) Develop our commissioning relationships with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) particularly those who deliver fostering services in Bury	Director of CSC & EH supported by Head of Strategy,	July 2026	Recruitment into the Commissioning Team continues. In addition, the council is contracting with an external consultant to accelerate development of the commissioning team and to consider how to improve our procurement of homes for children in care.	

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Progress	Impact RAG
		Assurance & Reform			
	c) Establish two Children's Homes in Bury, to include short break provision, to strengthen care planning and sufficiency	Director of CSC & EH	October 2026	Council have agreed funding and discussions are ongoing with a local provider. There is no confirmed decision.	
	d) Develop supporting lodgings offer to ensure there is the required range of homes to meet the needs of our children and young people	Director of CSC & EH	January 2026	Application submitted November 2024 but multiple delays in registration, linked to backlogs within Ofsted due to new legislation and DBS requirements. Providers are in place, but we cannot use them for young people under the age of 18 without the Ofsted registration. Re-submitted application January 2026 – this has been rejected April 2026 due to the form being submitted over 12 months ago, and an ask to complete their new form. This was completed in July 2026.	
2.6 Transitional safeguarding arrangements ensure that there is seamless protection for young people as they move into adulthood <i>See also action 3.4</i>	a) Work with Adult Social Care & partners to implement the GM approach to transitional safeguarding	Director of CSC & EH, Director of Adult Social Care	April 2026	We are working with Adult Social Care and partners to establish our Transitional Safeguarding approach. A Partnership meeting took place in April 2026 supported by GM CST; it was agreed that 2 areas will be tested: Joint complex safeguarding – subgroup and a task & finish group re planning to test a new approach in neighbourhoods. We attended the GM Transitional Safeguarding event on the 17 June and presented our experiment approach.	

Priority 3: Ensure a strategic and co-ordinated approach to providing support for care leavers to improve their outcomes

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Progress	Impact RAG
3.1 Young people benefit from robust, consistent and holistic pathway planning that promotes stronger and timely outcomes.	a) Ensure Personal Advisers (PAs) are driving plans, ensuring partner agencies are actively involved in developing/contributing to pathway plans for our care experienced young people to promote optimal outcomes for our young people	Corporate Parenting Board supported by Head of Corporate Parenting & Head of Safeguarding Unit	June 2026	Following audit activity led by the HoS, an external consultant will run training sessions with PAs to improve quality of pathway plans ensuring that they are actively seeking the input from relevant professionals as part of the pathway planning process. Pathway plans remain variable however there is greater challenge from managers, and the new Team Manager will be coaching individuals to improve the quality of plans. There has been an independent audit in June which recognises an improvement in the quality of pathway plans compared to 12 months prior. Training with PAs is being arranged, most likely for August.	
3.2 There is a good understanding of young people's health histories which enables professionals to ensure the right support is in place, and it is considered within pathway planning	a) Ensure that CYP are in receipt of their health histories at 18 years of age and that Health needs are addressed within effective planning, recognising care leavers right to decide who their information is shared with.	Associate Director for Nursing, Quality and Safeguarding Corporate Parenting Board supported by Head of	March 2026	In touch case proforma completed by PAs following each visit has been updated to ensure there is a focused discussion around health. Discussions are underway as to the timing of the discussions around health histories. They are currently up to date for all young people who have turned 18 and work is ongoing to ensure that these remain timely, where RHAs fall close to their 18th birthday they are being completed at the same time.	

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Progress	Impact RAG
		Corporate Parenting		There is a need to ensure the pathway plans reference the health passport which will be incorporated in the training referenced above, and Team Managers are aware to check this as part of the approval of pathway plans.	
3.3 Young people have appropriate access to health services that meet their needs	a) Review and raise awareness of pathways to access specialist mental health services for our care leavers	Corporate Parenting Board	March 2026	Operational Manager at PCFT has signposted to online training for practitioners working with young people at risk of mental health concerns, which has been shared with PAs. There is a variety of modules available, and PAs are starting with those most relevant to their roles. The Beebot app will support improved information around pathways. We will work with young people over summer to develop the app in response to their needs and wishes.	
3.4 Risks to care experienced young people are understood and plans to safeguard and protect them are in place to reflect changing needs	a) Ensure that each care leaver has an updated safety plan that reflects their current needs to ensure risks are fully understood and addressed	Head of Corporate Parenting	November 2025	The Safety Plan used within the looked after service is now being used within leaving care where there are increased risks – this includes consideration of frequency of visits and levels of support. Where a young person visits The Hub and there are clear risks, the staff on duty are able to update the safety plan. They are also completed as part of our Critical Case Briefing process.	
	b) Protocol to be agreed between CASS, Next Chapter and Complex Safeguarding Teams to ensure that the needs of care experienced young people	Head of Corporate Parenting	March 2026	Protocol has been developed and is in place. Currently there are 9 care experienced young people receiving direct support from the Complex Safeguarding Team.	

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Progress	Impact RAG
	at risk of exploitation and missing are met		May 2026	Weekly consultations are held by CST team for CASS and Next Chapter, to discuss concerns and understand whether further support is needed from CST. The CASS Service Manager and CST Team Manager are working with the teams to ensure practitioners are using the weekly consultations when concerns emerge.	
3.5 Children and young people are well supported to access education, employment and training opportunities	a) Personal Advisers to understand themes and blockers to securing opportunities	Head of Corporate Parenting supported by Head of Skills	July 2026	Our Care Leavers task & finish group continues to meet monthly to consider any general issues in relation to NEET, understanding system blockers and work out a way forward. This group includes the Next Chapter team managers, Skills team, and Virtual School. Next Chapter Managers share this learning through PA supervisions and team meetings. The action has been completed but will remain RAG rated as amber until the impact of our work is felt and our EET performance indicator improves. EET is currently 53%. For those young people who are classed as 'NEET – Other', the main issues relate to substance misuse, mental health and family influence.	
	b) Implementation of the EET/NEET Plan on a Page (POP) to support young people who have turned 18 up to the end of Year 13	Virtual School Headteacher	December 2025	This is now in place, and our Post-18 Lead is using it with the full cohort of young people this year. Feedback from colleges is positive and it is providing a better insight re. achievements and support needed.	

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Progress	Impact RAG
				Training developed and delivered to Personal Advisors to run the EET POPs, established Post 16 monthly meeting, tracked. NEET figures have decreased overall for Care Leavers to 48% but the VS cohort NEET is currently 18%. In place, all trained, support from EET Lead.	
	c) Virtual School Post-16 EET Lead to support EET through direct work with, and support to, our young people	Virtual School Headteacher	July 2026	Post-16 EET Lead continues to work with our young people and provide support e.g. taking to University visits further afield, college interviews, buying specialist clothing for courses & job interviews. We are exploring options to increase support capacity, with a view to employment commencing in September. In the meantime, the Post-16 EET Lead is receiving support from other colleagues, particularly around young people with SEND. Targeted work with our unaccompanied asylum seeking children, ensuring that they have access to English language courses to then enable access to further EET opportunities. In December, we also provided laptops and educational resources to support language and numeracy skills. Post 16 EET Lead re-evaluated to reflect needs of the cohort and duties being undertaken - now Post 16 Advisor. Approval to recruit to an additional 2 Year FT advisor to support transition to post 16 and additional opportunities to be sought. Only	

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Progress	Impact RAG
				MD in post still needs other post advertising and recruiting.	
	d) Ensure robust tracking and oversight of our care experienced young people who are not currently engaged in EET	Head of Skills supported by Head of Corporate Parenting	September 2026	Tracker in place with structured discussion of care experienced young people taking place through EET Panels, chaired by Head of Corporate Parenting and attended by Personal Advisers to agree next steps and share opportunities. Since Easter 2026, weekly EET tracking meetings have been established, also chaired by the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting, providing strengthened strategic oversight and a consistent forum for reviewing EET/NEET status, barriers, and actions across both Next Chapter teams. This ensures clearer accountability, escalates risks more quickly, and maintains a shared focus on improving EET outcomes for care experienced young people. More robust Power BI EET/NEET reporting is now in place, providing improved clarity, consistency, and the ability to track cohort-level progress over time. Work continues to embed clear EET/NEET recording standards, aligned with DfE definitions and Greater Manchester practice.	
	e) Working with colleges and employers to ensure a range of opportunities for our young	Head of Skills	September 2025 – July 2026	Systems to support improved pathways into education, employment and training for care leavers continue to strengthen.	

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Progress	Impact RAG
	people and ensuring a pathway into the world of work			A Care Leaver EET Task and Finish Group meets monthly to coordinate activity across the local authority, colleges and employers, maintaining oversight of opportunities and ensuring a steady pipeline of courses, placements and employment routes for care leavers. There is now a more consistent programme of opportunities and short courses available to care leavers, funded through LA Grant and Inactivity Trailblazer funding. This includes a successful horticulture programme, with three young people currently participating, alongside a range of targeted employability and confidence-building courses accessible to the wider cohort. A recent Meet the Manager event has taken place, with positive feedback from young people. Further work will be undertaken to review the format and delivery of future events to maximise accessibility and engagement for as many care leavers as possible. EET outcomes have improved through a combination of a steady stream of opportunities, improved and more responsive recording, and increased oversight of NEET young people through refreshed forums and tracking arrangements. As a result, EET levels for care leavers are now in line with national averages (approximately 54–55%),	

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Progress	Impact RAG
				representing a sustained improvement from earlier in the year.	
3.6 Care experienced young people feel safe and live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs	a) Develop options for Bury to deliver supported accommodation services in-house	Head of Strategy, Assurance & Reform	April 2026	Tendering for Young People's Accommodation and Support Services in 3 lots: - Lot 1 – 40 self-contained units of accommodation in blocks with shared communal space for 18 to 25 year olds, with 6 to 9 follow on outreach support – this commenced 2nd February and has been through mobilisation period - Lot 2 – 20 units of Ofsted registered mixed accommodation, with 6 to 9 months follow-on outreach support for young families aged 16 to 25 years old - Lot 3 – Ofsted registered Accommodation and Support Service – 9 units for children aged 16 to 18 years – did not have any bidders in original process however Adult colleagues helped to identify 2 sites in Prestwich with great transport links, shops and green space – building works are now in progress and properties ready to be expected in late May/early June, aligning well with completion of tender. We are also exploring opportunities with Barnardo's GAP housing for an additional 4 highly supported, supported accommodation homes for older children currently in residential care.	
	b) Develop further housing options for care leavers	Head of Strategy,	Ongoing up to 2030	As part of the council's approval of housing developments, we are ringfencing a small number	

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Progress	Impact RAG
		Assurance & Reform		of properties in suitable developments for care experienced young adults – a total of 50 units by the end of 2030, across 10 separate developments spread around the borough; and 30 units by the end of 2028. Timescales on some projects have slipped slightly. We are also working with a registered social housing provider to develop a wider range of available accommodation (14 units) for post-18 UASC care leavers with no final decision on immigration status.	

CREATE THE CONDITIONS FOR GOOD PRACTICE

Priority 4: Ensure effective multi-agency governance, partnership arrangements and support for children, young people and their families

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Progress	Impact RAG
4.1 Effective governance arrangements support the delivery of transformation programmes of children's services, resulting in improved outcomes for children	a) Develop Strengthening Outcomes Board to ensure a multi-agency approach to improving outcomes for children and young people	Exec Director CYP	October 2025	A new Strengthening Outcomes Board was established in August with the first meeting taking place in October. The Board replaces the Improvement Board and will ensure a partnership approach to support the refreshed Improvement Plan. Terms of Reference have been agreed.	
	b) Review Corporate Parenting Board governance (including sub-group arrangements) to support delivery of Improvement Plan	Executive Director CYP	October 2025	The CPB Operational Board oversees delivery of the Corporate Parenting Plan, replacing the three task & finish groups which previously existed. Operational Board meets monthly and reports to the CPB Board, with Operational Board highlight reports shared. The Corporate Parenting Action	

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Progress	Impact RAG
				Plan has been refreshed to align with this Improvement Plan.	
	c) Consider the Family Safeguarding Strategic Partnership Board in relation to the reforms	Executive Director CYP	December 2025	The Family Safeguarding Partnership was reviewed and its remit extended to include the reforms in October 2025. A subsequent review has seen the strategic partnership oversight and accountability for implementation moved to the BSCP (June 2026). This is supported by a Families First Partnership Programme Board which meets monthly.	
	d) Ensure effective links with Bury Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP) around shared priorities: understanding and improving the impact of our collective response to: - domestic abuse - sexual abuse - neglect - voice and influence of children	Executive Director CYP	July 2026	BSCP priorities are an integral part of our Learning & Development Plan. We have consistent representation at BSCP Board and the thematic sub-groups.	
4.2 Effective governance arrangements in place to ensure we deliver on the agreed outcomes of the Education and Inclusion Strategy	a) Establish Education Board to monitor delivery on pillars set out in the strategy	Director of Early Years, Education & Skills	March 2026	Education Board will include stakeholders across health, social care and the school sector to be established. The first meeting was delayed due to local area SEND inspection followed by SEND Reforms activity but will take place in September 2026. An Executive Group has been established which will review the detailed highlight reports from the workstream leads, and will decide what needs to	

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Progress	Impact RAG
				be presented at Board for more detailed challenge and oversight.	
	b) Establish Education Sub-Group of the Bury Children Safeguarding Partnership Board	Director of Early Years, Education & Skills	December 2025	Key stakeholders to include Director of Education (Chair), Education sector representatives (to include school senior leaders and designated safeguarding leads), virtual school head, SEND lead, Early Years lead, Family Hub lead. Group has been established and had its first meeting in January 2026 (to meet termly), with strong attendance across school system and wider partners.	

Priority 5: Ensure a stable and effective leadership and management team that enables good social work practice to flourish

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescale	Progress	Impact RAG
5.1 Team Managers are delivering regular, reflective, good quality supervision which is driving improved outcomes	a) Heads of Service and Service Managers to routinely observe supervisions to ensure management oversight is consistently ensuring progress against the plan	Director of CSC & EH supported by Heads of Service	January 2026 July 2026	Heads of Service will undertake monthly observations of their Service Managers, who will do the same of their Team Managers, with a clear focus on the impact of managers on practice. Director of CSC & EH will routinely observe Heads of Service to ensure observations of managers at all levels. Some observations have been completed by Heads of Service, a template has been developed to enable learning to be shared and understood more widely. This will be reported in via the QA forum.	

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescale	Progress	Impact RAG
5.2 Managers at all levels are driving progress for					
	b) Improve recording of supervision through implementation of Magic Notes, to ensure it is reflective, captures review of plans, addresses any drift or delay	Director of CSC & EH supported by CYP Improvement Manager	October 2025 April 2026	Supervisions are now supported by Magic Notes templates following full procurement of the system. There is greater evidence of focus on plans and reflection within supervision. We need to ensure this is used consistently across all managers. We are keeping all Magic Notes use under review through dip sampling activity as well as through our core audit programme. In April it was agreed that HoS and Service Managers should regularly be dip sampling to review use of AI. From April we also amended the audit toolkit to capture the impact of the use of AI (MagicNotes) on recording and this data will be available mid-July once Power BI reports amended.	
	c) Commission external training with Research in Practice to deliver supervision training to managers	PSW	March 2026 July 2026	Initial planning meeting took place with Research in Practice in January. Subsequent to this we had discussions with managers and decided to explore developing our own management training programme, which supervision would be part of. A programme has been drafted and discussed in our monthly Extended Manager Meeting (EMM) in April; following feedback this has been reviewed and is planned to be finalised at the next EMM (July 2026). We will then commission delivery through a number of external providers.	
5.2 Managers at all levels are driving progress for	a) Heads of Service to ensure a detailed, granular	Heads of Service	April 2026	Heads of Service understand the strengths and areas for development for their managers, informed	

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescale	Progress	Impact RAG
children and can evidence their impact in the quality of practice and support offered to children and families	understanding of skills and experience of their management team and how individual managers can be supported to drive the quality of practice			by direct line sight of practice in overseeing decisions, panels, performance and audit. This has informed the annual Employee Reviews which were completed April to June 2026. This knowledge is being used to co-produce a management development programme via Extended Managers Meeting (see action below).	
	b) Implement a Learning & Development Plan that drives a high challenge, high support culture and holds the line on quality of practice, reduces variability and lifts the quality of practice in their areas of responsibility	Director of CSC & EH supported by Heads of Service	June 2026 August 2026	Annual Learning & Development has been reviewed and is linked to organisational, service and partnership priorities. Mandatory training and induction by role matrix is in place. This will be updated following the EMM discussion referenced above, alongside a review of all completed Employee Reviews which are being completed June/July. The Workforce Board has been reviewed and as part of a refreshed agenda will focus on identified training needs, at an individual level but also team and service.	
	c) Closing the loop between observation of inconsistent practice and training to be strengthened, so that where inconsistent practice is seen this will require additional learning and development	Director of CSC & EH supported by Heads of Service	March 2026	The QA framework has been reviewed and updated to reflect that, where practice is judged as either inadequate or requires improvement through audit, the practitioner and their manager will be directed back through relevant training.	

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescale	Progress	Impact RAG
	opportunities being delivered to individual managers		June 2026	This will be kept under review in the monthly QA Forum, and there is a QA-led Teaching Tuesday session each month to share learning. Each service is holding a closing the loop session each month to bring in practitioners for discussion on their audit, to ensure those reflective discussions are taking place.	
	d) Managers to provide their oversight of practice at key panels chaired by HoS/SMs to ensure line of sight into the quality of management oversight	Director of CSC & EH supported by Heads of Service	December 2025	Panels continue to take place and ensure oversight as to quality of practice, for example Legal Gateway Panel, Challenge to Care meetings, Permanence Panel, Residential Panel, Joint Housing Panel. These are well established with improved attendance however there is more to do to ensure presentation at panel is consistently providing strong evidence of managerial oversight and driving improved practice.	
	e) Develop the existing weekly performance architecture around Team Managers to ensure reports provided have a stronger focus on the quality of practice, in addition to key performance indicators. Weekly performance meetings chaired by the Head of Service	Heads of Service	October 2025	Reports are completed weekly, focusing on key performance indicators. Heads of Service lead on weekly performance meetings within the service. These then feed into our senior oversight meetings including Performance & QA SMT (led by Director of CSC and EH) and our DCS Performance & Outcomes meeting (chaired by DCS).	

Priority 6: Ensure a skilled, confident & experienced workforce

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Progress	Impact RAG
6.1 Children and young people can build trusting relationships with practitioners who work collaboratively and with openness and honesty	a) Increase the proportion of permanent staff within the workforce (aim for 10% true vacancy rate)	Director of CSC & EH	July 2026	We continue to get a strong level of interest in posts in Bury. In June 2026 we had 19 of 22 (86.3%) of Team Managers being permanent and we are currently onboarding 2. At points in the year, we have had over 94% permanent. Over the past year, we have been more successful recruiting permanent social workers, and this has improved the stability of the workforce and decreased changes of social worker - currently, 65% of children open to the service for longer than 6 months have had the same social worker for 6 months or longer. We have achieved increased workforce stability over the last year, in June 2026 14.3% of posts were covered by agency workers (up from 55% 2 years ago), with a true vacancy rate (allowing for agency workers covering full-time post holders absent currently for maternity leave or long-term sickness) of 11%. We have struggled to recruit skilled and experienced IRO's which has impacted on their ability to retain a tight grip on practice and planning for children. IRO posts have now been through a job evaluation process and are gradings are now consistent with the Team Manager gradings which	

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Progress	Impact RAG
				will support more effective recruitment strategies and approaches going forward.	
6.2 Quality of practice with children and families is consistently of a high standard, and drives improved outcomes This will ensure trusting relationships between children/young people and practitioners, impact chronologies consistently in place which inform timely and holistic assessments, outcomes focused plans, impactful management supervision & oversight and a clear voice of children and young people which is heard and influences plans.	a) Review our delivery approach to the Bury Commitments and the impact this is having on the quality of practice, including the quality of plans and contingency planning	PSW supported by Heads of Service	December 2025 July 2026	We have had a targeted approach in our delivery to areas of service where we have identified issues, including through performance and audit. This includes specialist training, reflective learning sessions and team reflective discussions. Following discussion at Workforce Board It has been agreed to change delivery to focus on a child's journey/case study, with clearer alignment to systems to improve recording of practice. Refreshed training materials will be reviewed by SMT before re-launch, and will need to consider the Families First Partnership Programme. Audits are showing improving practice to RI/Good judgements.	
	b) Review practice guidance – including planning - to ensure guidance reflects our learning from audit and external scrutiny and is explicit in relation to key areas of practice.	Director of CSC & EH	May 2026	Review of all practice standards is ongoing and will be completed by the end of August 2026. This is taking longer than expected as we are needing to ensure any updates reflect the FFPP expectations.	
	c) Closing the loop between observation of inconsistent practice and training to be strengthened, so that where inconsistent practice is seen	Director of CSC & EH supported by Heads of Service	March 2026	The QA framework has been reviewed and updated to reflect that, where practice is judged as either inadequate or requires improvement through audit, the practitioner and their manager will be directed back through relevant training.	

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Progress	Impact RAG
	this will require additional learning and development opportunities being delivered to individual practitioners			This will be kept under review in the monthly QA Forum, and there is a QA-led Teaching Tuesday session each month to share learning. Each service is holding a closing the loop session each month to bring in practitioners for discussion on their audit, to ensure those reflective discussions are taking place.	
6.3 Bury practitioners and managers have a clear induction pathway to support them in delivering high-quality services for children and families	a) Implement a Social Work Academy approach around our learning & development	Director of CSC & EH supported by PSW	April 2026 July 2026	Content has been pulled together by our Workforce Development Team, and we have explored how other local authorities have approached this. We are keen to harness the functionality of our BeebotAI platform to host this, we have scoped out our requirements with the provider and are awaiting a formal quotation for decision.	
	b) Increase our scrutiny of compliance with training as set out within the mandatory Training by Role Matrix	Director of CSC & EH supported by Heads of Service	December 2025	We now utilise EventBrite to allow practitioners to book onto training. This also allows WFD team to track attendance clearly, which informs discussion at SMT monthly. We also share information on upcoming training (including BSCP) through Teaching Tuesdays and weekly email reminders to ensure managers are able to ensure attendance. It is also reviewed at Workforce Board. However, attendance at training remains an issue.	
	c) All new to Bury practitioners will have their work sampled after their first month in Bury, so we can ensure a consistent	Director of CSC & EH supported by	May 2026	This will be incorporated into our induction checklists at the one-month review point.	

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Progress	Impact RAG
	strengths-based approach to all of our work	Heads of Service		In the interim, this will be reviewed at the monthly QA forum to agree who will dip sample each new member practitioner.	
6.4 Evidence-based approaches to practice are strengthened through use of motivational interviewing	a) Ensure all practitioners and managers are trained in motivational interviewing, as a cornerstone of our Family Safeguarding model	PSW & WFD team	February 2026	In December and January, 5 bespoke MI training sessions took place targeting the Family Safeguarding service, on a team-based approach to training. This worked well and was replicated from January to March with a specific focus on FS and CwD service. All teams will be covered regardless of whether they have completed MI training previously. MI is now within the Training by Role matrix, offered quarterly. This will be rolled out more widely to support the Families First Partnership Programme implementation.	
	b) Dedicated training for Managers and Heads of Service to ensure that they are modelling motivational interviewing in every conversation and every meeting	Director of CSC & EH supported by Heads of Service	December 2025	Training delivered to all managers in a dedicated EMM session in November 2025. Action is complete, more to do to monitor impact.	
	c) Seek evidence of impact of motivational interviewing key principles through QA and feedback from our children and families	PSW	June 2026	Audit toolkit amended in October 2025 to better capture evidence of MI within the children's records and further amended Spring 2026. 19% of audits in the last 3 months show clear evidence of use of MI. Feedback from staff is that	

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Progress	Impact RAG
				this is a recording issue; there is more work to do to understand how this is and should be recorded.	

Priority 7: Ensure effective Performance Management, Quality Assurance and Management Information Systems that support good social work practice

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Progress	Impact RAG
7.1 IROs & CP Chairs are driving improved outcomes for children through timely care and child protection planning	a) Review the impact of the CP/IRO escalation protocol through weekly reporting mechanisms linked to escalations, timescales & practice themes	PSW supported by Heads of Service	December 2025	Escalation protocol is embedded in IRO/CP Chair practice. Weekly escalation reports are reviewed with Heads of Service, giving clear line-of-sight to themes, timeliness and outcomes for children. Outcomes of escalations are tracked and fed back into weekly performance clinics so IROs/CP Chairs can evidence challenge and resolution. Themes are escalated through Performance & QA meetings to drive service-wide improvement.	
	b) Complete self-evaluation for IROs and CP Chairs to support understanding of future development plans	Director of CSC & EH	November 2025	Self-evaluation completed with all permanent IROs and CP Chairs (Oct). Impact so far: - Identified development priorities and strengthened consistency in challenge and decision-making. - Feedback directly shaped the service L&D plan (e.g., legal learning sessions now in place).	

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Progress	Impact RAG
				Next step is to revisit the self-evaluation at agreed intervals to evidence impact on timeliness, quality of plans and escalation themes.	
	c) Deliver learning, development and mentoring to IROs to strengthen their understanding of their roles and responsibilities in line with the IRO handbook	Director of CSC & EH supported by SLIP	October 2025 to March 2026	Warrington support under SLIP was delivered in March and focused on strengthening IRO impact, IRO understanding of role within the organisation and importance of scrutiny and challenge. Measure of impact will be improved quality of IRO challenge, reduced drift, and better timeliness of key decisions (tracked via audit/escalation themes). Warrington delivered safe uncertainty and defensible decision making training in July as the final element of the SLIP support plan.	
	d) Deliver learning, development and mentoring to CP Chairs following observations of practice	Director of CSC & EH supported by SLIP	October 2025 to March 2026	Warrington carried out observations of CP conferences in March, alongside some dip sampling of records. A Team Manager is now in post who will take the learning forward into development of the CP Chairs. Measure of impact will be improved conference quality, clearer actions for partners, and better timeliness/quality of minutes and plans (tracked via QA and performance reporting). Warrington delivered safe uncertainty and defensible decision making training delivered in July as the final element of the SLIP support plan.	

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Progress	Impact RAG
	e) Review performance management arrangements to support continuous development and improvement eg mid-point reviews, timeliness of minute distribution	PSW	November 2025	Performance management arrangements for IROs/CP Chairs are being strengthened to support continuous improvement. Reports track mid-point reviews and support timely follow-up where drift is identified. Weekly tracker meetings monitor CLA reviews and CP conferences, with a specific focus on timely minute distribution and resolving any delays. This has resulted in improved oversight and timeliness, enabling IROs/CP Chairs to evidence how their challenge is driving progress for children.	
7.2 Management of allegations are consistently managed by the LADO, working to agreed processes to ensure consistency in approach and supporting effective decision making	a) Strengthen quality assurance mechanisms in relation to practice and performance of the LADO, including observations and quarterly reports	Director CSC & EH	March 2026	We have recruited a new full-time permanent LADO (to work alongside the existing LADO), to strengthen focus on the application and consistency of LADO threshold and practice. The Head of Service has observed a number of meetings in December/January and is setting up a more formal schedule to ensure these are routinely observed. Dip sampling will also be completed on a monthly basis.	
	b) Implement the new LADO workspace in LCS to ensure clear rationale is evident	DDaT Business Partner supported by CYP	January 2026 July 2026	A custom designed LADO workflow has been developed, implementation was slightly delayed due to unexpected issues arising from server migrations but went live at the end of June 2026.	

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Progress	Impact RAG
		Improvement Manager	August 2026	Some further amendments have been identified, these will be reviewed by SMT in July. Dip sampling planned for July/August.	
7.3 MI Systems support social workers in delivering high quality interventions	a) Implement MagicNotes and explore other innovative opportunities to ensure managers (including IROs & CP Chairs) have the right tools for the job, enabling the conditions for effective management	Heads of Service supported by PSW & WFD	Magic Notes – November 2025 to March 2026 (ongoing)	MagicNotes procurement completed in October and implementation plan is moving at pace, with delivery of additional templates so far including strategy meetings, visits, CLA review meetings, core groups, CIN meetings and fostering panel. We are on with development of ICPC/RCPC templates and Family Safeguarding Group Supervision. All new templates are monitored through targeted dip sampling and this will be supported through additional HoS/Service Manager sampling.	
	b) Ensure LCS supports good quality practice through delivery of the CYP LCS Development Plan	DDaT Business Partner supported by CYP Improvement Manager	September 2025 to March 2026	Our LCS Development Plan has been refreshed in line with current development priorities however progress was initially slower than anticipated due to challenges around resourcing. Additional capacity was secured in November 2025 and meetings with all Heads of Service took place to gather priorities for development. The plan has been reviewed and prioritised by the Director of CSC & EH to provide a clear plan and this will be monitored through SMT every month, to ensure all are sighted on progress and decisions around changes are not made in isolation.	
	c) Migrate performance reporting to Power BI to ensure that managers can drill down into	Head of Performance & Delivery supported by	January 2026	While there has been some development in recent months, progress has been impeded due to a lack of dedicated capacity to drive this forward.	

Desired Impact	Action	Accountable Officer	Timescales	Progress	Impact RAG
	service and team data on a self-serve basis.	Head of Strategy, Assurance & Reform	June 2026	We are exploring the external expertise that is available to move this forward – the scale of the task is growing in light of the requirements around quarterly reporting in relation to both FFP and the SEND reforms. Candidates are being reviewed and an Op Dec will be drafted for approval in July.	
	Note related digital improvement actions elsewhere in plan: • EHE (action 1.4) • CME (action 1.5) • Educational progress (action 2.4) • LADO (action 7.2)	See individual actions	See individual actions		

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Priority 1: Identify and effective support children and families in need of help and protection

Desired outcome	Action	Original timescale	Revised timescale	Accountable Officer	Milestones			KPIs
1.1 MASSH partners consistently share information that enables us to have a full understanding of family history that supports effective decision making for children and avoids the need for repeat contacts	a) Development sessions with MASSH Managers and partners to consider family history and the experiences of children consistently when making decisions	Nov-25		MASSH Strategic Partnership Board	Oct-25	Learning sessions to take place	Complete	
	b) Ensure MASSH Strategic & Operational Boards drive forward effective partnership working within the MASSH that improves our response to children and families	Jul-25		MASSH Strategic Partnership Board			On track	
	c) Quarterly thematic audit to review impact and to be considered as part of multi-agency audit cycle	Jul-25		MASSH Strategic Partnership Board	Quarterly	Quarterly audits	Complete	
1.2 Appropriate identification of the different forms of neglect and improved recognition of the impact of cumulative harm upon CYP supports timely and effective planning for children	a) Partners are consistently considering the neglect strategy when sharing concerns about neglect via contacts which ensures they are clearly setting out their worries in relation to the impact of neglect	Jan-26		BSCP & MASSH Strategic Partnership Board		Regular meetings of the Neglect Sub-Group	In progress	
	b) Embed use of Graded Care Profile 2 to support understanding about the root cause of neglect, consideration of cumulative harm and parental capacity to change	Jan-26		BSCP supported by PSW		Update GCP template on system to GCP2		
					Jul-26	Create GCP2 awareness video for partners		
	c) Deliver neglect training as a core part of induction for social workers and other relevant practitioners	Nov-25		PSW - or BSCP?	Quarterly	Quarterly training	On track	239 staff mandated to attend, 64% (153) attended as of July 2026
1.3 Effective work within Pre-Proceedings ensures timely interventions with families that are focused on a dynamic understanding of the child’s lived experience and reduces escalation of concerns	a) Ensure robust management oversight identifies children who needs to be supported within pre-proceedings in a timely way	Oct-25		Head of Family Safeguarding	Oct-25	Introduce Challenge to Care meetings	Complete	
					Nov-25	Introduction of senior management oversight points: Service Manager review CPP at 8.5 months & 14 months, HoS CPP over 18 months	Complete	
	b) Embed PLO Impact Board to monitor the lived experience of those children in proceedings and pre-proceedings, to ensure that interventions are impactful, and timely decisions are made with active consideration of the child’s lived experience	Mar-26		Head of Family Safeguarding	Mar-26	Weekly meetings	Complete	
1.4 Young people benefit from robust, consistent and holistic planning that promotes stronger and timely outcomes	a) Plans for children and young people are SMART and focused on reducing risk, addressing unmet needs and promoting positive outcomes including emotional wellbeing	Apr-26		Head of Early Help & Head of Family Safeguarding	Apr-26	Regular training	On track	Quality of plans through audit
1.5 All children are supported to access their educational entitlement in line with the 5 pillars of the Education and Inclusion Strategy:	a) Launch Education & Inclusion Strategy to ensure a shared understanding and vision with schools and clarity of expectation in relation to inclusion and safeguarding	Nov-25		Director of Early Years, Education & Skills	Nov-25	Launch Strategy	Complete	
					Sep-26	Establish Exec Group	Complete	
					Sep-26	First meeting	On track	
	b) Launch the refreshed Graduated Approach and Communities of Practice to ensure greater collaboration and opportunities for shared learning and build capacity	Nov-25		Head of SEND	Sep-25	Launch event	Complete	
					Mar-27	Expansion into EAH	On track	SEND Reforms Plan
	c) Develop Education Systems (e.g. Eyes/Power BI) to remove manual processes and provide real time attendance and exclusions data	Mar-26	Oct-26	Director of Early Years, Education & Skills	Sep-26	Review and link datasets	Delayed	

Action added after submission

Desired outcome	Action	Original timescale	Revised timescale	Accountable Officer	Milestones			KPIs
	d) Strengthen EHE assurance protocol and reporting to ensure we have oversight of the quality of EHE children receive and their outcomes, linked to issue of School Attendance Orders (SAOs) if appropriate through Children Not In School (CNIS) panel	Dec-25	Jul-26	School Attendance Exclusions Community Education Manager	Dec-25	Review EHE Protocol	Complete	
					Half-termly	Half-termly audits of EHE casework	In progress	QA report?
						Training to CSC practitioners	Complete	
	e) Ensure robust procedures in place to return CYP to full-time education with a focus on more vulnerable cohorts	Feb-26	Jul-26	School Attendance Exclusions Community Education Manager & Virtual		Review CME Protocol	Complete	
						Embed CME Panels	Complete	
						Introduction of broader suit of KPIs	Complete	
	f) Strengthen the support for children with a social worker through enhanced Virtual School engagement	Jul-26		Virtual School Head	Quarterly	Quarterly audits of CME practice	In progress	QA report?
						Introduce Virtual School Advisory Teacher (Early Years)	Complete	
						Develop toolkit/pathway to address Barriers to Education		
	g) Strengthen the support for children in care through enhanced Virtual School (VS) engagement	Jul-26		Virtual School Head		Fortnightly Assurance Board, including HoS from CSC	Delayed	Affected by absence of Virtual School HT; back on track from Aug 2026
						Include Virtual School in the placement sign-off process (PF4)	Complete	
1.6 Wider community and professionals recognise Private Fostering arrangements which results in children who live in Private Fostering arrangements feeling safe and well supported	a) Bi-Annual targeted awareness raising to promote recognition of Private Fostering and understanding of roles and responsibilities	Jan-26		BSCP supported by Head of Family Safeguarding	Oct-25	Agree plan with BSCP	Complete	3 as of July 2026
					Nov-25	Private Fostering Week	Complete	
					May-26	Refresh promotional materials	Complete	
	b) Provide a timely, effective and compliant response for children living in Private Fostering arrangements (evident through dip sampling/audit) ensuring that their needs are being met	Dec-25		Head of Family Safeguarding	Aug-25	Reeview Private Fostering audit tool	Complete	
					Quarterly	Quarterly audits	On track	
					May-26	Training to CSC practitioners within Family Safeguarding	Complete	
1.7 Children's social care reforms transform services to children and families in Bury, ensuring they receive the right help and support at the right time within their own communities and avoid escalation of concerns	a) Develop network of Family Hubs which is integrated into the place-based neighbourhood approach and supports delivery of the reforms	Mar-26		Executive Director CYP & Executive Director, Health and Adult Care (and Deputy Place Lead -	Mar-26	Chesham Fold Best Start Family Hub opening	Complete	
					Oct-26	Re-brand Children's Centres to Best Start Family Hubs	On track	
					Aug-26	Opening of our first Live Well Centre	Complete	
					Jun-26	Submit Best Start Family Hub Delivery Plan	Complete	
	b) Develop delivery plan for implementation of the social care reforms	Dec-25		Delegated Safeguarding Partners	Dec-25	Submit delivery plan to DfE	Complete	
	c) Appoint a lead officer to support the development of and implementation of the social care reforms	Nov-25	Mar-26	Director of CSC & EH	Mar-26	Appoint a lead officer (Practice Lead) to support the delivery of the reforms plan	Complete	
	d) Restructure services in line with reforms	Dec-26	Mar-27	Delegated Safeguarding Partners	Mar-27	See FFP Implementation Plan	In progress	

Action added after submission

SCRUTINY REPORT

MEETING: Children and Young People Scrutiny

DATE: 15th September 2026

SUBJECT: SEND Sufficiency Update

REPORT FROM: Nick Bell Secondary inclusion Lead - Schools

CONTACT OFFICER: Nick Bell Secondary inclusion Lead - Schools

1.0 BACKGROUND**Introduction**

SEND Sufficiency is a central aspect of the wider SEND Reform Agenda, ensuring that local areas have the capacity, provision, and resources needed to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. Within the context of SEND Reform, sufficiency focusses on providing the right support, in the right place, at the right time, reducing reliance on specialist placement and improving inclusion with mainstream settings wherever appropriate.

Bury's Draft SEND Sufficiency Strategy Priorities are designed to support the aims of the SEND Reform Plan by strengthening local provision, enhancing early intervention and improving outcomes for children and families through creating a more inclusive, equitable, and financially sustainable SEND system.

The Draft SEND Sufficiency Strategy reflects the priorities of the Department for Education's SEND and Alternative Provision Reforms and should be considered alongside the Bury Education and Inclusion Strategy, Bury Local Area Partnership SEND Strategy and the Alternative Provision Strategy.

2.0 ISSUES**Bury's context**

Bury has a higher prevalence of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) than seen nationally and across the Northwest. While the overall rate of EHCP growth is stabilising as a result of work delivered through the SEND Improvement activity, demand for specialist provision, particularly for pupils with autism (ASC), social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) and speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) continues to place pressure on the local system. In addition, there has been a marked increase in the number of children and young people educated outside mainstream and maintained provision, including those placed in independent non-maintained settings and EOTAS, particularly at secondary and post-16 phases.

Summary of Current Provision

Bury currently provides a broad and developing range of education and training provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) across mainstream, specialist and alternative settings. Strengths within the local system include

comparatively high levels of mainstream inclusion, recent expansion of resourced provision and SEN units at primary phase, and increased specialist capacity within local special schools.

In response to increasing demand, Bury has invested significantly in expanding local SEND capacity. Over the past three years, the Local Authority has:

- Developed 130 places across primary resourced provisions and SEN units.
- Expanded specialist school capacity at Millwood and Elms Bank.
- Opened Brookhaven School in 2023, providing dedicated specialist autism provision.
- Planned further expansion of specialist places through the opening of Willow Grove, a new secondary SEMH free school, expected to provide an additional 65 places from 2028.

Despite these developments, current provision is uneven across phases and types. Demand continues to exceed supply for children and young people with autism (ASC) and social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH), particularly at Secondary and Post 16.

Key gaps include:

- Secondary phase capacity, particularly for pupils with autism (ASC) and social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH), where progression routes from primary provision are not consistently available.
- Post-16 pathways for young people with more complex needs, resulting in increased reliance on alternative provision, EOTAS and independent settings.
- Timely access to targeted and specialist provision, leading to escalation of need and increased placement instability.
- Coherent step-up and step-down pathways, reducing the ability to reintegrate children and young people back into mainstream settings where appropriate.

Future Demand

Forecasting indicates that overall demand for SEND provision in Bury will continue to rise over the period 2026–2030, albeit at a slower rate than experienced in recent years. The profile of demand is expected to continue to be shaped by:

- Ongoing growth in ASC and SEMH as primary areas of need.
- Increasing complexity of need, particularly at secondary and post-16 phase.
- Continued pressure on alternative provision and Section 19 arrangements without sufficient local pathways.

This is likely to lead to the continued growth in the use of independent non-maintained provision and out of borough placements, increased reliance on alternative provision and EOTAS, placement instability and financial pressure on the High Needs system

SEND Sufficiency Priorities 2026-2030

Bury's SEND Sufficiency Priorities recognise that sufficiency cannot be addressed solely through expanding specialist places and reflect the aims of the SEND Reform Plan in prioritising the development of enhanced mainstream provision in order to ensure that wherever possible young people's needs are met in their local provision, through early identification and intervention, targeted support and clear coherent pathways.

Four priority areas have been identified to support the strategic aims which are:

Priority one

Reducing demand for Specialist and Alternative Provision, through early identification, intervention and targeted support.

This work is focussed on:

- Continuing the work already in place, to embed Ordinarily Available Inclusive practice across all education settings
- Further strengthening the graduated approach and early identification process through the development of the mainstream inclusion framework, supported by clear pathways for specialist advice and targeted support through a single point of access which will be launched at the Inclusion conference at the end of September.
- Developing workforce capacity and confidence within mainstream settings through the established communities of practice model, enhanced by the development of “Experts at Hand” and deployment of expertise from local specialist settings and our Alternative Provision Academy (Ashgrove).

Priority two

Developing a coherent and sustainable continuum of provision across mainstream, mainstream specialist units and special schools.

This work is focussed on:

- Ensuring balanced and coherent pathways across phases, ensuring young people can have their needs met within Bury through an inclusive continuum of provision that offers the right support, in the right place at the right time.
- Supporting the development of mainstream inclusion bases in line with SEND Reform guidance.
- Development of future mainstream specialist units, particularly regarding the secondary phase and with a focus on SEMH and Autism.
- Creating additional Secondary Specialist SEMH provision through the planned opening of Willow Grove SEMH Free School.

Priority three

Ensure sufficient and high-quality alternative provision to meet Section 19 duties and reduce long-term reliance on EOTAS (Educated otherwise than at school)

In line with the Bury Alternative Provision Strategy and proposed DFE Reforms of non-school Alternative Provision this work is focussed on:

- Developing the preventative and outreach offer from our Alternative Provision Academy (Ashgrove) to reduce permanent exclusion through providing specialist advice and support and time limited placements, including high-quality vocational provision. There is not currently pre-16 vocational provision available in Bury apart from, Bury Colleges Year 11 programme.
- The development of a graduated Alternative Provision model comprising targeted support in mainstream schools, time-limited intervention and transitional placements. The Bury Alternative Provision Directory will be re-commissioned this year to this end.
- Increasing the availability of high-quality registered provision to meet statutory duties under Section 19 for those young people who are not able to access school due to exclusion, illness or otherwise.
- Continuing to ensure that non-school alternative provision within Bury, meet the voluntary non-school Alternative provision standards.
- Increasing the availability of time limited and transitional placements to support mainstream inclusion and reintegration.
- Reducing long-term reliance on EOTAS and unregistered provision through developing appropriate support and placements with our special schools, Alternative Provision Academy and registered alternative providers.

Priority four

Strengthening Post 16 Sufficiency and preparation for adulthood through local pathways into education, training and employment.

This work is focused on:

- Working with colleges, training providers and partners to expand and strengthen the range of post 16 pathways available for young people with SEND.
- Improving access to local specialist provision, supported internships, apprenticeships, functional skills and reengagement programmes.
- Reducing reliance on Alternative Provision and EOTAS at Post 16 through the development of flexible, inclusive and personalised local education and training pathways. Almost half of Bury's EOTAS cohort is post 16, highlighting the need for strengthened local provision.

3.0 CONCLUSION

Bury has made significant progress in expanding local SEND provision and strengthening inclusive practice across the borough. However, increasing demand, particularly for children and young people with Autism (ASC), Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, and those requiring post-16 support, continues to present challenges. The SEND Sufficiency Priorities for 2026-2030 provide a clear strategic framework to address these pressures through earlier intervention, enhanced mainstream inclusion, a more coherent continuum of provision, strengthened alternative provision pathways, and improved preparation for adulthood. By delivering these priorities in partnership with schools, families, health services and providers, Bury will be better positioned to meet future demand, improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND, and create a more sustainable and inclusive system.

List of Background Papers:-

Contact Details:-

[Report Author]

Executive Director sign off Date: _____

JET Meeting Date: _____

SCRUTINY REPORT

MEETING: Children's and Young People's Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 15th September 2026

SUBJECT: Families First Partnership Programme Reforms

REPORT FROM: Jeanette Richards, Executive Director Children & Young People

CONTACT OFFICER: Beth Speak, Children's Transformation & Improvement Manager

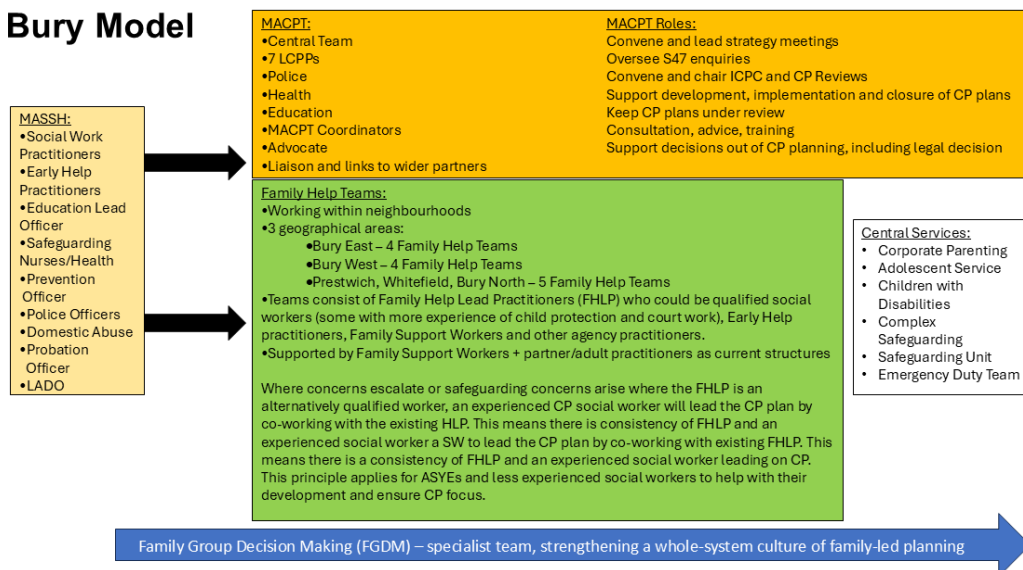
1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 As reported to Committee in November 2025, the government's Families First Partnership (FFP) reforms set out a new national model for how children's social care services must operate. The aims of FFP are to refocus the children's social care system on prevention, stronger partnership and multi-agency teams, robust multi-agency child protection system and develop greater use of family networks and family group decision making.
- 1.2 There are clear expectations for how services for children and families should be structured, how work is delivered, and how services are coordinated across agencies.
- 1.3 This report provides an update on implementation of FFP in Bury.

2.0 PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTATION

- 2.1 Plans are progressing well and Bury is on track for implementation by April 2027.
- 2.2 We have mapped out services what services will look like, and how teams will ensure families continue to be supported:

Bury Model



- 2.3 Our front door arrangements are already operating as a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub. A recent peer review of our MASSH was carried out in August by colleagues in Blackpool who were recently judged outstanding by Ofsted, and are also a Family Safeguarding local authority. Their feedback will be used to further develop implementation plans ensuring that our MASSH provides firm foundations for our FFP implementation.
- 2.4 There is a very strong alignment between the Families First Partnership Programme (FFP) and Family Safeguarding, which is why Bury's implementation approach is to build on and retain the Family Safeguarding model rather than replace it. The reforms are mutually reinforcing and support many of the same outcomes
- 2.5 We are proposing Family Help Teams working across three neighbourhood localities, and teams will be made up of Targeted Early Help, Duty and Assessment and Family Safeguarding teams working as integrated Family Help teams. Whilst undertaking the same work as they do now, these teams will work together to ensure that children and families receive a seamless service, with one worker throughout their involvement (Family Help Lead Practitioner (FHLP)). The FHLP could be social work qualified or alternatively qualified. All child protection work will continue to have a qualified social worker, who will be responsible for the child protection plan.
- 2.6 We have developed a draft single assessment 'Family Help Assessment' and plan which will remain with the family throughout their involvement.
- 2.7 Under the Bury Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP) our threshold document is under revision, bringing together targeted early help and child in need.
- 2.8 There is an expansion of our existing Special Guardianship Order (SGO) Support Service and Kinship Care Support Service, with a further review expected to meet the requirement of publishing the Bury Kinship Care Support offer. This will support permanence and stability for children and young people, keeping children within their family network.
- 2.9 Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPT) will bring together experts from Social Care, Police, Health and Education, ensuring the right decisions are made at the right time for children and seeking to protect all children from actual or likely significant harm, both inside and outside the home.
- 2.10 We are working with partners to clarify their roles and responsibilities within the MACPT and intend to start to test different elements from October onwards. Greater Manchester Police are already testing the role of the police in MACPT in Manchester and are sharing information

on how this is progressing. The police want a consistent approach for all the GM local authorities.

- 2.11 We have a job description for the new roles of Lead Child Protection Practitioners (LCPPs) who will be qualified social workers with substantial frontline child protection experience. By testing how the MACPT operates, and how partners work together we aim to be able to recruit to these posts and be ready for implementation in April 2027. We are working with the Voluntary Sector to recruit an Advocate for parents and carers involved in the child protection process.
- 2.12 Family Group Decision Making and family network meetings enable wider family members to come together and make a family-led plan. In Bury we are making good progress and have trained our staff in family network meetings. We have recruited additional family group decision making facilitators, which will strengthen our ability to provide this service at an earlier stage. We also have an expectation that all families will be supported in family network meetings.
- 2.13 We have a detailed workforce development plan, which includes support to partner agencies. The training and support will start in mid-October to ensure that staff receive appropriate training prior to implementation.
- 2.14 We have been having regular discussions with all staff within Children and Young People Services to keep them informed on plans, discuss concerns and we have responded to their questions. We have focused on the impact for staff and have developed a link where staff can ask questions and see responses to questions.
- 2.15 New staffing structures have been drafted and will be presented to October Cabinet as a Key decision, if approved, consultation with would commence will run until the end of November. A closure of consultation meeting should take place early December 2026 to confirm the outcome of the consultation to staff.
- 2.16 Partners play a critical role in delivering the Families First reforms, with responsibility shared across local authorities, health, police, education, early years providers, the voluntary sector and other safeguarding partners. Successful implementation relies on strong multi-agency leadership, shared decision-making, integrated teams and a collective commitment to providing earlier help, strengthening child protection arrangements and improving support for families. We have ensured partners have been part of the plans since the beginning, with initial socialisation workshops with the Safeguarding Partnership and multi-agency governance arrangements. Those arrangements have recently been strengthened by ensuring that the FFP Programme Board is a formal sub-group of the Bury Safeguarding Childrens Partnership.
- 2.17 We are working with Voluntary and Community Sector in commissioning Advocacy Services from families, parents, and communities.
- 2.18 External oversight of the reforms continues with quarterly meetings with the DfE North-West Regional Team, which include the delegated safeguarding partners (DSPs). Quarterly finance returns, documenting utilisation of grant monies are submitted to the DfE. External support has also been provided through the DfE Delivery Partner, Mutual Ventures, such as workshop delivery and socialisation of the reforms with partners but also acting as critical friend in our implementation plans, however in recognition of progress being made in Bury this support is likely to wind down in the coming months.

List of Background Papers:-

[FFPP Guide](#)

Contact Details:-

Beth Speak, CYP Improvement & Transformation Manager

Executive Director sign off Date:_____

JET Meeting Date:_____

SCRUTINY REPORT

**MEETING: CYP
Scrutiny Committee**

DATE: 15/09/2026

**SUBJECT:
NEET Update**

**REPORT FROM:
Ben Dunne**

**CONTACT OFFICER:
Ben Dunne**

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 National Context

Recent years have seen increased national attention on young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), reflecting concerns about the long-term impact that disengagement can have on life chances, skills development, employment outcomes and economic growth.

Whilst national debate increasingly considers participation and NEET outcomes across a broader age range, including young adults aged 18 to 24, local authority statutory duties remain focused on the participation and tracking of young people of academic age 16 and 17.

Accordingly, this report focuses on the cohort for which Bury Council has statutory responsibility, namely young people in Year 12 and Year 13.

Local authorities have a statutory duty to encourage, enable and assist young people to participate in education, employment or training and to maintain accurate records of their participation status.

1.2 Understanding Participation Measures

The participation measure comprises three categories:

- Education, Employment or Training (EET)
- Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)
- Not Known

When assessing performance, NEET and Not Known should be considered together as representing those young people whose participation outcomes are not secured.

1.3 Seasonal Nature of NEET Performance

NEET figures fluctuate throughout the academic year and follow a predictable pattern. Historically, the lowest levels of NEET are seen between December and February. Following Easter and towards the end of the academic year, NEET figures typically rise as young people

complete courses, leave employment, or move between destinations before progressing into further learning, training or work.

As a result, changes in NEET performance during the year do not necessarily indicate a deterioration in overall performance. The performance data within section 2 is compiled from the DfE published 'NEET Scorecard' which takes an average of Dec 2025, Jan 2026 and Feb 2026 submitted data.

1.4 Participation

Participation measures the proportion of 16 and 17 year olds engaged in education, employment or training in line with the Raising of the Participation Age legislation.

Bury's participation rate currently stands at 91.3%, which is broadly in line with the North West average of 91.4% and slightly below the England average of 92.0%. Participation has increased by 1.1 percentage points compared to the previous reporting period.

Whilst participation legislation places an expectation on young people to remain engaged in education or training until age 18, there are limited powers available to enforce this requirement. Consequently, support and engagement activity remain the primary mechanisms through which participation is promoted.

1.5 NEET and Not Known

NEET and Not Known provide a measure of those young people who are not currently participating or whose activity cannot be confirmed.

Bury's current position is:

Year	Cohort Size	NEET + Not Known %	NEET %	Not Known %
2019	4,362	4.0%	3.7%	0.3%
2020	4,488	4.0%	3.7%	0.3%
2021	4,554	3.5%	3.3%	0.3%
2022	4,567	3.6%	3.4%	0.2%
2023	4,594	3.9%	3.9%	0.0%
2024	4,811	4.0%	3.8%	0.2%
2025	4,996	4.1%	4.0%	0.0%
2026	5,102	4.3%	4.3%	0.1%

Bury's current NEET rate of 4.3% is lower than both the North West average (5.5%) and the England average (5.8%), putting Bury in quintile 2 this year. The authority's Not Known rate is significantly below both regional (1.3%) and national (2.4%) comparators, providing confidence that the local authority has a robust understanding of the participation status of young people across the borough.

The DfE published 'NEET scorecard' shows Bury's NEET rate increased by 0.2 percentage points compared with the previous reporting year. Over the same period, the North West average decreased by 0.2 percentage points, whilst the England average increased by 0.2 percentage points.

Statistical Neighbour Comparisons:

Authority	NEET + Not Known
Bexley	2.7
Bury	4.3
North Tyneside	4.4
Nottinghamshire	4.4
Cornwall	5.7
Norfolk	5.8
Lancashire	6.0

Stockton-on-Tees	7.1
Kent	8.0
Medway	10.8
Dudley	12.7

Although there has been a small increase in the local NEET rate, Bury continues to perform better than both regional and national comparators and maintains exceptionally low levels of Not Known young people. This provides confidence that performance reflects an accurate picture of participation across the borough.

1.6 Vulnerable Groups

Whilst overall participation rates remain strong, the risk of becoming NEET is not evenly distributed across the young person population.

	Vulnerable Group NEET/NK*	EHCP NEET/NK	SEN Support NEET/NK
Bury	20.7%	11.0%	8.7%
Statistical Neighbour Average	26.4%	10.8%	10.1%
North West	26.8%	11.2%	10.3%
England	26.4%	9.9%	10.0%

*includes LAC, Refugee/Asylum Seekers, Carers – not own child, Disclosed substance misuse, Care leaver, YOT, Parent – not caring for own child, Alternative provision and mental health flags

Young people identified as belonging to a vulnerable group account for 4.2% of Bury's academic age 16 and 17 cohort, which is broadly in line with the statistical neighbour average (3.9%) and the North West average (4.3%), although higher than the England average (2.9%). Young people within this group have a combined NEET and Not Known rate of 20.7%. Whilst this remains a significant challenge, Bury performs more favourably than the statistical neighbour average (26.4%), the North West average (26.8%) and the England average (26.4%). This suggests that, whilst Bury experiences similar levels of vulnerability to comparable areas, outcomes for these young people compare positively against regional, national and statistical neighbour benchmarks.

Educational needs are also a significant factor in determining participation outcomes. Young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) have a combined NEET and Not Known rate of 11.0%, which is broadly in line with the statistical neighbour average (10.8%) and the North West average (11.2%), although slightly higher than the England average (9.9%).

Young people receiving SEN Support have a combined NEET and Not Known rate of 8.7%, compared to the statistical neighbour average of 10.1%, 10.3% across the North West and 10.0% nationally.

By comparison, young people without an identified SEND need have a NEET and Not Known rate of 3.2%, illustrating the additional barriers faced by many young people with SEND and other vulnerabilities.

These figures demonstrate that, whilst Bury performs broadly in line with or better than statistical neighbour, regional and national comparators for many vulnerable groups, a disproportionate number of young people who become NEET continue to come from cohorts facing additional barriers to participation. This reinforces the importance of targeted support through Connexions, transition planning, the SEND Sufficiency Strategy, re-engagement provision and partnership working across education, training and support services.

2.0 Issues

2.5 Supporting Young People into Positive Destinations

Bury Council's Connexions Service has responsibility for tracking the participation status of all young people of academic age 16 and 17 and providing targeted support to those at risk of becoming NEET or who are already NEET.

This includes maintaining contact with young people, identifying appropriate opportunities and providing information, advice and guidance to support progression into education, employment and training. The exceptionally low Not Known rate achieved by Bury reflects the effectiveness of these tracking arrangements and provides confidence in the quality of local participation data.

Alongside its statutory tracking function, the service also delivers targeted re-engagement support through the Future:Ready programme, funded through Greater Manchester devolved funding arrangements. The programme supports young people who are NEET to develop confidence, skills and employability skills before progressing into sustainable education, employment or training opportunities.

Members should note that young people participating in re-engagement provision are recorded within the Department for Education's participation measures as participating and therefore count as EET. Whilst this reflects meaningful engagement, many participants are actively working towards a longer-term destination and some demand may therefore be less visible within headline NEET statistics.

2.6 Growth in the Number of Young People

A significant challenge facing the local system is the increasing number of young people within the participation cohort.

The academic age 16 and 17 population recorded increased from approximately 4,565 young people in March 2022 to 5,116 in March 2026, representing an increase of over 12% over the period.

Whilst increasing demand affects all parts of the post-16 system, it can have the greatest impact on young people who require additional support to engage and sustain participation. Competition for places, limited specialist provision and reduced flexibility within the system can create additional barriers for vulnerable young people, reinforcing the importance of maintaining a broad range of accessible education, training and re-engagement opportunities.

2.7 Availability of Suitable Provision

Bury College has increased learner numbers in recent years and remains a key partner within the borough's post-16 education landscape. However, traditional Further Education provision is not suitable for all young people.

Each year a proportion of learners leave college before completing their programme, whilst others require more vocational, practical or specialist pathways than those typically available through a mainstream college environment.

The availability of alternative post-16 provision is a challenge that extends beyond Bury and is reflected across Greater Manchester and nationally. Whilst the Department for Education funds post-16 provision, there are currently limited mechanisms to encourage new providers into the market where gaps are identified.

Historically, Bury has been heavily reliant upon North Lancs Training Group (NLTG) as the principal provider of alternative vocational pathways for young people who may not be suited to a traditional college route.

2.8 Prevention and Early Intervention

The Council works closely with schools through a range of careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) activities. This includes the annual Bury Careers Event, bringing together employers, training providers and education establishments to help young people understand the

breadth of pathways available to them. The Council also facilitates a local CEIAG network and regular communications with schools to ensure education providers remain informed about developments within post-16 education, training and employment opportunities. These activities support schools in delivering high-quality careers education and preparing young people for informed post-16 choices.

The Council works alongside the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) to support schools in meeting the Gatsby Benchmarks and continually improving careers provision. The Gatsby Benchmarks provide a national framework for high-quality careers guidance, covering areas such as employer engagement, encounters with further and higher education providers, workplace experiences and linking learning to future careers. Through the local Careers Hub, Careers Leaders from schools and colleges are brought together to share good practice, collaborate on common challenges and access support to strengthen careers programmes.

The Council also coordinates the Bury Menu, which provides schools and colleges with access to a range of careers, employability and enrichment activities delivered by employers and partner organisations to complement existing careers programmes and broaden young people's exposure to the world of work. Schools are additionally supported through destination tracking information, helping them understand post-16 outcomes and use this intelligence to evaluate careers provision and identify areas for improvement. The Council recently established the Employers in Education initiative further strengthening links between education providers and local employers, helping schools access careers talks, mock interviews, mentoring opportunities, workplace encounters and other employer-led activities.

Connexions Advisers undertake Risk of NEET Indicator (RONI) activity with schools to identify young people who may be at increased risk of becoming NEET. This enables additional support and targeted interventions to be put in place before young people leave compulsory education. The approach forms part of a broader preventative model that seeks to address barriers at an early stage rather than waiting until a young person becomes disengaged. Similar arrangements are being extended through the sharing of Risk of NEET information with Bury College from September 2026 to help identify learners who may require additional support to sustain their participation.

The Council also supports schools through targeted work experience opportunities and workplace engagement activities. Bury Council's work experience programme seeks to support young people who may otherwise struggle to secure a placement, enabling them to gain valuable experience and develop employability skills. Alongside this, Workplace Safari visits hosted within the Council, provide young people with first-hand experience of different work environments and help broaden their understanding of local employment opportunities.

The Council is also actively engaging with emerging careers activity in primary education. Through work led by the Careers and Enterprise Company, new Partnership and Quality Leads have been appointed to support primary schools across Greater Manchester. A number of Bury schools have already participated in pilot activity designed to help schools develop more structured approaches to careers-related learning, aspiration raising and employer engagement at an earlier age.

Particular emphasis is placed on supporting vulnerable groups. The Virtual School works closely with education providers and partners to support children in care and care experienced young people through Personal Education Plans, assessing risk of NEET through Attendance monitoring from Reception to the end of Year 11. In addition, the Virtual School employs a dedicated post 16 advisor who, working with Connexions, provides additional support to help young people navigate key educational transitions, sustain participation and successfully progress into further education, training and employment opportunities whether they are living in or out of borough. As young people move into adulthood, support continues through Plan on a Page (POPs) arrangements and dedicated 18+ Education, Employment and Training (EET) support, helping ensure aspirations, progression goals and support needs remain visible and coordinated across services and features heavily as a priority in the Corporate Parenting Plan and Children and Young People's improvement plan. The Council has also strengthened its approach to Preparing for Adulthood for young people with SEND, ensuring that transition planning forms a key component of Annual

Reviews from Year 9 onwards, supporting young people and their families to prepare for future education, employment and independent living outcomes

2.9 Developing New Opportunities

Alongside this preventative activity, Bury continues to invest in targeted support and additional opportunities for young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET.

Through Local Authority Grant devolved funding, Bury Council's Connexions Service delivers the Future:Ready programme and commissions a range of targeted interventions designed to support young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET. This funding provides additional staffing capacity, dedicated keyworker support, personalised interventions and access to bespoke opportunities that complement Connexions statutory service. The programme works with young people facing a range of barriers to participation, helping them progress into sustained education, employment and training opportunities.

The funding has also enabled the Council to commission a number of innovative short courses and engagement programmes aimed at supporting young people furthest from education, employment and training. This has included the Skills CC programme delivered in Radcliffe, which received national recognition and contributed to Bury Council receiving a national award.

The authority is also seeing encouraging developments within the local provider market, including:

- From September 2026, Bury Council will begin sharing Risk of NEET (RONI) information with Bury College to help identify students who may require additional support at an early stage, with the aim of improving retention and reducing the risk of disengagement.
- The Council also continues to work with schools to identify young people at an increased risk of becoming NEET, enabling earlier intervention and support before they leave compulsory education. Members should note that young people are more likely to be NEET in year 13 than immediate year after leaving school (Jan 2026 figures Yr12 2.8% NEET compared to Yr13 5.6%).
- A new partnership between YMCA and RAP Alternative Provision, delivering a dedicated programme from Bury FC aimed at engaging young people who are NEET.
- The introduction of a new NEET pathway at Bury College, providing additional in-year referral opportunities for young people. Historically, college enrolment opportunities have largely been concentrated at the start of the academic year.
- TechFirst AI offering provision from Sept 2026, working with employers including JD Sports to create progression pathways into digital careers and apprenticeships for a small cohort of young people.
- Ongoing work with Bury EST to develop additional opportunities specifically targeted at young people who are NEET.

These developments represent a positive expansion of local provision and are expected to strengthen the range of progression opportunities available to young people over the coming years. Nevertheless, the post-16 sector remains subject to significant change, including qualification reform and evolving funding priorities. Whilst these developments have the potential to improve progression routes for many young people, there is a need to ensure that those with additional barriers to participation are not disadvantaged by a reduction in flexible or alternative pathways.

2.10 Outcomes from Partnership Working and Transition Support

Whilst it is difficult to attribute participation outcomes to any single intervention, the range of preventative, transition and re-engagement activity delivered across the borough contributes to maintaining comparatively strong participation outcomes. Bury's combined NEET and Not Known rate remains below both regional and national averages, whilst the authority also maintains exceptionally low levels of Not Known young people, providing confidence in the robustness of

local tracking arrangements and partnership working between schools, colleges, training providers, employers and support services.

The impact of this collaborative approach should also be viewed in the context of increasing demand. Since 2019, the academic age 16 and 17 cohort has increased from approximately 4,362 young people to over 5,100, an increase of around 17%. Despite this growth, the combined NEET and Not Known rate has remained broadly stable, fluctuating between 3.5% and 4.3% over the period. This suggests that partnership activity, transition support and targeted interventions have helped maintain positive outcomes for young people despite increasing system pressures.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Performance in Bury around young people not in education, employment and training is comparatively strong when viewed against England as a whole or similar local authorities, but remains an area for improvement, especially for young people facing multiple disadvantages. Extensive work is being carried out to widen the opportunities available to Bury young people and to ensure that our young people are best placed to take advantage of them.

List of Background Papers:-

Contact Details:-

Ben Dunne, Director of Early Years, Education and Skills

Executive Director sign off Date: 10/09/2026

JET Meeting Date: _____

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