

SCRUTINY REPORT

MEETING: Children & Young People Scrutiny

DATE: 23 July 2026

SUBJECT: Children's landscape

REPORT FROM: Jeanette Richards, Executive Director, CYP

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

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Children's Services are operating within a period of unprecedented change, driven by a combination of national reform, local improvement priorities, increasing demand for services, financial pressures and changing expectations of how support is delivered to children, young people and families.
- 1.2 At a national level, the implementation of the children's social care reforms including the Families First Partnership Programme, Best Start in Life, SEND reforms, alternative provision developments and increasing integration with health and community partners are reshaping the way local authorities organise and deliver services. These changes require significant redesign of structures, processes, workforce roles and partnership arrangements.
- 1.3 Locally, the Department continues to drive continued improvement while responding to growing complexity of need, continued demand pressures across statutory services and the requirement to deliver better outcomes within a constrained financial environment. This has resulted in a substantial programme of transformation affecting nearly every aspect of service delivery.

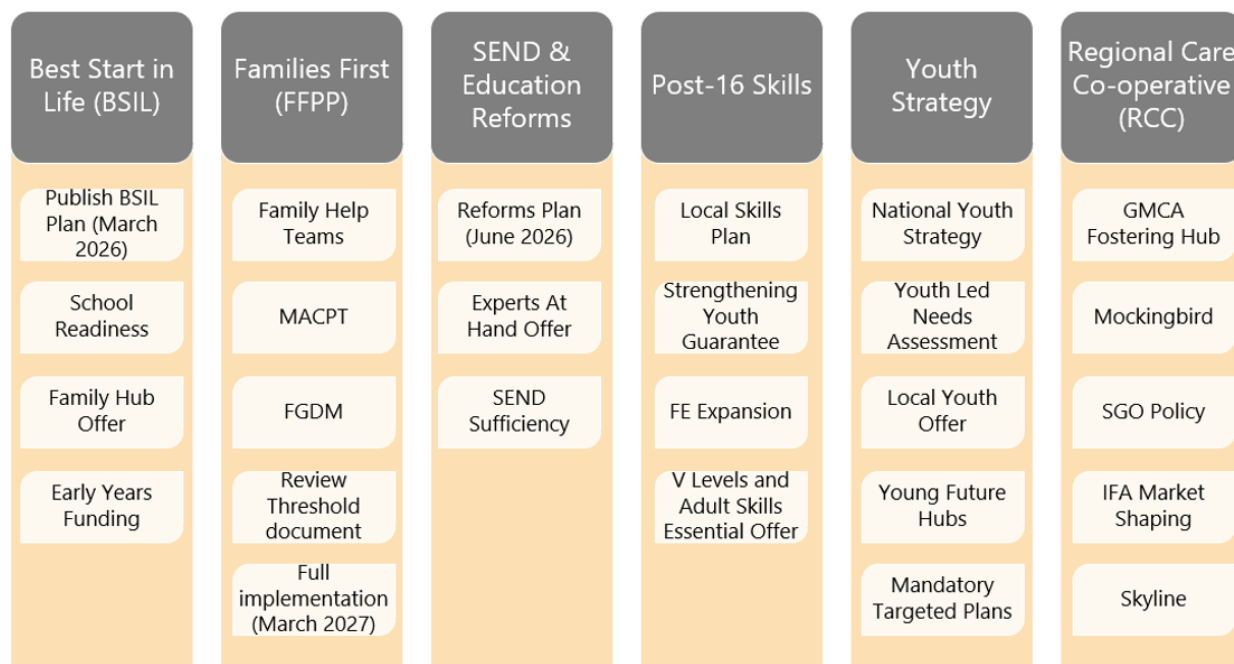
2.0 ISSUES

Competing demands – multiple transformation programmes

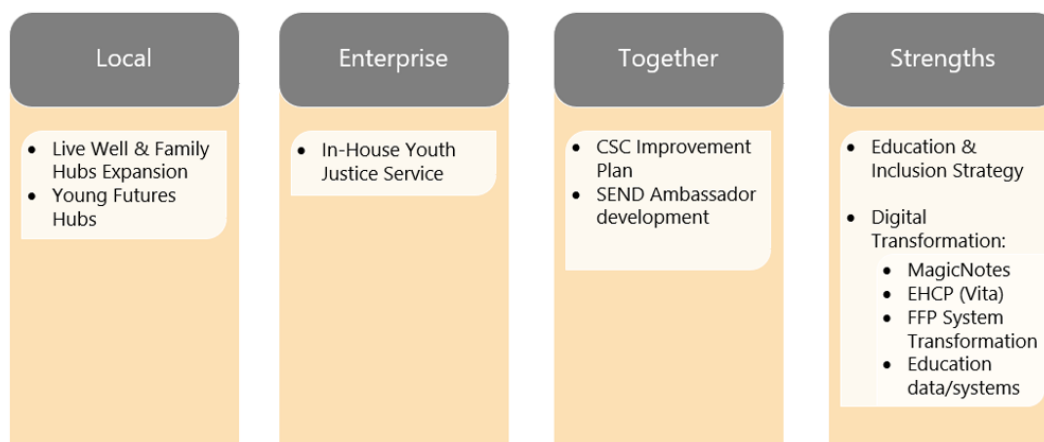
- 2.1 The Children & Young People Department is not implementing a single change programme but managing several large-scale reforms simultaneously. These include:
- Delivery of the Children's Social Care Reset which includes implementation of the Families First Partnership Programme (FFPP).
 - SEND Reforms.
 - Best Start in Life.

The two diagrams below reflect the main transformation projects currently underway:

Nationally driven programmes:



Locally set priorities:



- 2.2 The scale of transformation places pressure on limited and finite resources to ensure that we continue to improve our services for children and families while delivering the expected changes.

Workforce and Cultural Change

- 2.3 Successful transformation requires significant workforce adaptation, including:
- Development of new roles and functions.
 - Changes to multi-disciplinary working arrangements, building on the strengths of our Family Safeguarding model of practice.
 - New professional practice expectations with a range of updated statutory and non-statutory guidance that is being published on a regular basis and will continue for the next 12 - 18 months.
 - Enhanced quality assurance and performance management processes.
 - Workforce development and training programmes.

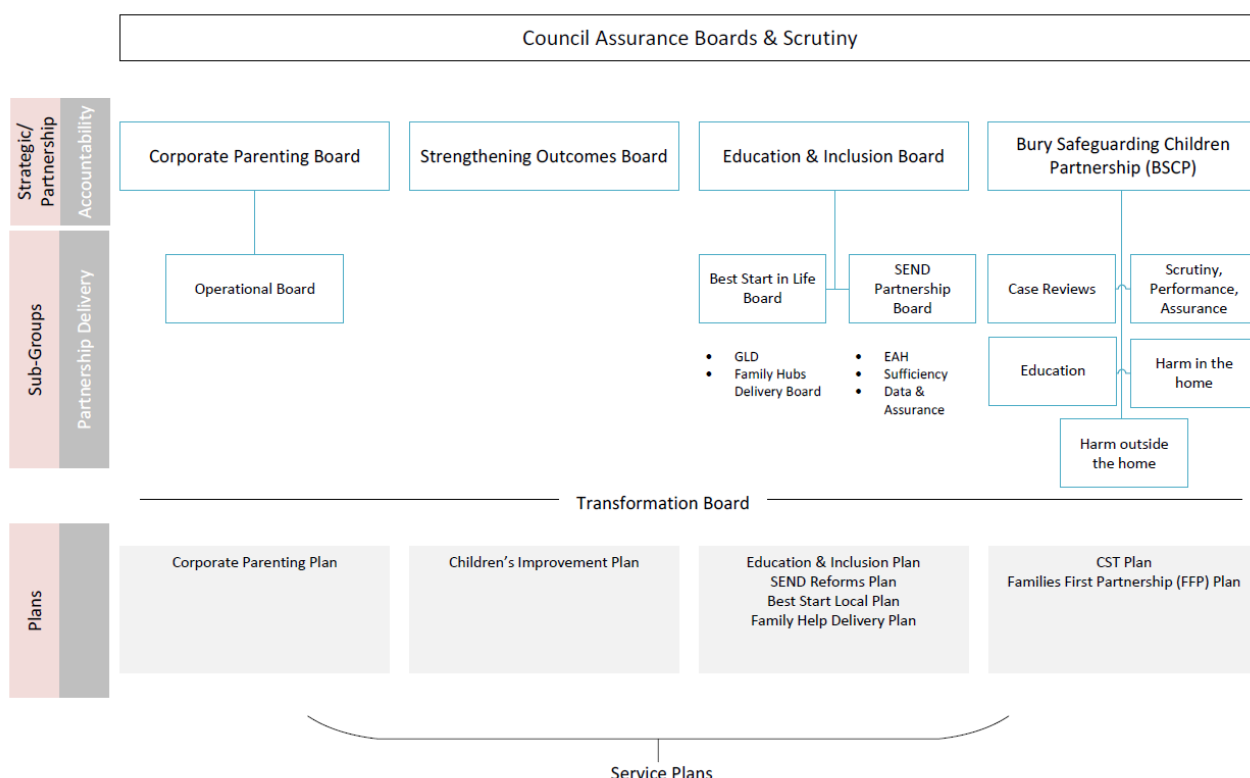
- 2.4 Alongside structural changes, there is a need to embed a culture focused on early intervention, whole-family working, partnership delivery and continuous improvement using the foundations of our Family Safeguarding model of practice and our Communities of Practice in relation to children and families with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Financial and Resource Pressures

- 2.5 Transformation is taking place alongside ongoing budget pressures and increasing service demand. The Department must:
- Maintain safe and effective statutory services.
 - Deliver savings and efficiencies where required.
 - Invest in transformation activity.
 - Manage implementation risks.
 - Demonstrate value for money and improved outcomes.
- 2.6 Balancing transformation activity whilst maintaining business-as-usual operations presents a significant leadership and operational challenge.

Governance and Delivery Complexity

- 2.7 The scale of change requires robust governance arrangements and we continue to review and evolve governance to adapt as needed, striking a balance between effective oversight and assurance and the number of meetings for senior leaders and managers, to ensure there is time to effectively deliver within the required timescales.
- 2.8 The diagram below shows the current governance arrangements and oversight of core plans:



External Scrutiny

- 2.9 The Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework is being reviewed to align with the Families First Partnership Programme: family networks, right help at the right time, relational practice, family group decision making and use of kinship care. Inspectors, as always, will not focus on structures or plans, but on the impact of our

practice on the experiences of children and families, and the outcomes we have achieved. Updated frameworks are due early 2027.

- 2.10 In Bury, we can expect a focused visit or Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) in the next few months, and the same again in another 12 months. A full re-inspection is due 3 years after our last, therefore Summer 2028.
- 2.11 Our next SEND inspection is likely between February and September 2027, based on the dates of our last judgement inspection (February 2024) and monitoring inspection (March 2026).

3.0 CONCLUSION

The scale of change extends beyond individual projects and represents a fundamental redesign of services, delivery models, workforce arrangements and partnership working.

Whilst the challenges are considerable, the transformation programme provides a significant opportunity to create a more integrated, preventative and sustainable system that delivers improved outcomes for children, young people and families. Continued scrutiny, strong governance and sustained leadership focus will be essential to ensure that reforms are implemented successfully, risks are managed effectively and the intended benefits are realised.

List of Background Papers:-

Children's Social Care Reset
Families First Partnership
SEND Reform
Every Child Achieving and Thriving

Contact Details:-

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Executive Director sign off Date: _____

JET Meeting Date: _____