



Shropshire Council  
Legal and Democratic Services  
Guildhall,  
Frankwell Quay,  
Shrewsbury  
SY3 8HQ  
Date: Wednesday, 17 September 2025

**Committee: Council**

**Date: Thursday, 25 September 2025**

**Time: 10.00 am**

**Venue: Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ**

You are requested to attend the above meeting. The Agenda is attached

**Members of the Council** – a briefing note will be circulated by e-mail prior to the meeting with important housekeeping details and arrangements for the meeting.

**Members of the Public** – If you wish to attend the meeting, please e-mail [democracy@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@shropshire.gov.uk) to check whether a seat will be available for you.

Please click [here](#) to view the livestream of the meeting on the date and time stated on the agenda

The recording of the event will also be made available shortly after the meeting on the Shropshire Council Youtube Channel [Here](#)

Tim Collard  
Service Director – Legal, Governance and Planning

Duncan Borrowman  
(Chairman)  
Gary Groves (Vice-Chair)  
Heather Kidd (Leader)  
Alex Wagner (Deputy Leader)  
Sho Abdul  
Caroline Bagnall  
Elizabeth Barker  
Bernie Bentick  
Neil Bentley  
Ed Bird  
Jeremy Blandford  
Andy Boddington  
Thomas Clayton  
Susan Coleman  
Rachel Connolly  
Tom Dainty  
Jamie Daniels  
Rosemary Dartnall  
David Davies

Pamela Davies  
Andy Davis  
Julian Dean  
Joshua Dickin  
Mandy Duncan  
Greg Ebbs  
Susan Eden  
Donna Edmunds  
Craig Emery  
Brian Evans  
Roger Evans  
Adam Fejfer  
Rhys Gratton  
Andy Hall  
Kate Halliday  
Harry Hancock-Davies  
Nick Hignett  
Alan Holford  
George Hollyhead  
Ruth Houghton

Dawn Husemann  
Peter Husemann  
Benedict Jephcott  
Robert Jones  
Duncan Kerr  
Christopher Lemon  
Nigel Lumby  
Brendan Mallon  
Sarah Marston  
David Minnery  
Vicky Moore  
Mark Morris  
Alan Mosley  
Malcolm Myles-Hook  
Chris Naylor  
James Owen  
Mark Owen  
Wendy Owen  
Vivienne Parry  
Ed Potter

Rosie Radford  
Sharon Ritchie-Simmons  
Carl Rowley  
Charles Shackerley-Bennett  
Colin Stanford  
Jon Tandy

Colin Taylor  
Dan Thomas  
Teri Trickett  
David Vasmer  
Beverley Waite  
David Walker

Sam Walmsley  
Alison Williams  
Rob Wilson

Your Committee Officer is:

**Ashley Kendrick** Committee Officer

Tel: 01743 257713

Email: [tim.ward@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:tim.ward@shropshire.gov.uk)

# AGENDA

## **1 Apologies for Absence**

## **2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

Members are reminded that they must declare their disclosable pecuniary interests and other registrable or non-registrable interests in any matter being considered at the meeting as set out in Appendix B of the Members' Code of Conduct and consider if they should leave the room prior to the item being considered. Further advice can be sought from the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting.

## **3 Minutes (Pages 1 - 12)**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting held on 17 July 2025.

## **4 Announcements**

To receive such communications as the Chairman, Leader and Head of Paid Service may desire to lay before the Council.

## **5 Public Questions**

To receive any questions from the public, notice of which has been given in accordance with Procedure Rule 14. Deadline for notification is 12.00 noon on Friday 19 September 2025.

### **PETITION**

A petition, bearing over 1000 signatures has been received from Sian Powell, requesting a debate under the Council's Petition Scheme. The petition urges the Council to:

"Prioritise funding, find sustainable financial solutions, and explore partnerships that can safeguard the future of Teme Leisure's offerings."

## **6 Questions from Members**

To receive any questions from Members, notice of which has been given in accordance with Procedure Rule 15.2. Deadline for notification is 12.00 noon on Friday 19 September 2025.

## **7 Corporate Peer Challenge Report and Response**

The report of the Chief Executive is **TO FOLLOW**

Contact: Andy Begley - 01743 258915

## **8 A New Direction for Shropshire**

The report of the Leader will be **TO FOLLOW**

Contact: Councillor Heather Kidd – [heather.kidd@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:heather.kidd@shropshire.gov.uk)

**9 SEND and AP Strategy and Outcomes Framework (Pages 13 - 66)**

The report of the Director of Children's Services is attached.

Contact: David Shaw – 01743 256479

**10 Children's Social Care Ofsted Report and Next Steps (Pages 67 - 100)**

The report of the Director of Children's Services is attached.

Contact: David Shaw - 01743 256479

**11 Bishop's Castle Leisure – Approval for Decarbonisation and Pool Renovation Project (Pages 101 - 112)**

The report of the Service Director for Commissioning is attached.

Contact: Laura Tyler - 01743 253178

**12 Appointment to Committees**

**Changes to Committee Membership**

**Audit & Governance Committee**

Councillor Sharon Ritchie Simmons to be a member of the Audit & Governance Committee

Councillor Nigel Lumby to be a member of the Audit & Governance Committee

Councillor Mark Owen to be a member of the Audit & Governance Committee

Councillor Duncan Borrowman to be a member of the Audit & Governance Committee

**Southern Planning Committee**

Councillor Josh Dicken to replace Councillor Chris Naylor as a member of the Southern Planning Committee

Councillor Nigel Lumby to replace Councillor Mark Morris as a Member of the Southern Planning Committee

**13 Motions**

The following motions have been received in accordance with Procedure Rule 16:

**a Motion received from Councillor Duncan Kerr and supported by the Green and Independent Group**

Last year Carers UK launched a policy report and a national campaign to establishing that caring should be a protected characteristic under the Equalities Act saying

“Carers have given us strong evidence that they do not feel that there is a level playing field. They feel invisible, overlooked, and discriminated against. When applying for jobs, equality monitoring forms do not ask whether someone has unpaid caring responsibilities. There is no direct requirement for simple reasonable adjustments for carers in the

workplace. Carers say that this would make a difference”.

This Council has already shown its willingness to help those who suffer disadvantage and discrimination by its unanimous decision to treat care-leavers as having a protected characteristic under this Act and I know this has meant a lot to the children that we have parental responsibility for. Carers clearly feel they suffer discriminations and inequality that limits their role. Empowering them by giving them this protection would not only improve the quality of life for the people they care for but also reduce demands on Social care.

We therefore call on the Council to:

1. Support the campaign by Carers UK to make having caring responsibilities a protected characteristic under the Equalities Act and
2. To treat carers in Shropshire as though they had a protected characteristic.

**b Motion received from Councillor Rosemary Dartnall and supported by the Labour Group**

The financial crisis that has been rumbling forwards for a number years has reached an inevitable crunch point. Unless urgent action is taken to avert a section 114 notice, Shropshire Council will not be able to balance its budget this financial year. If we cannot pull back from the brink, we are now looking at the very real prospect of government commissioners running the council.

This outcome is not in the public interest and I'm sure none of us want it to happen.

The basic member allowance is due to increase by 3.2% - to be back-dated to either 1 April or 5 May, in the October payroll. **We propose the increase for all councillors is cancelled immediately.**

Allowing for the addition of basic allowance multipliers for portfolio holders and councillors with certain roles, this will save £44,500 in the current financial year and impact positively on coming years. While a relatively minor financial contribution in terms of the overall position, it equates to 5% of the current shortfall and represents a small but important step in the right direction.

Unanimous agreement to this motion would demonstrate leadership and make a strong statement to the public and to Shropshire Council staff, who have endured several years of uncertainty about their jobs.

Please vote with us to cancel the proposed member increase with immediate effect.

**c Motion received from Councillor Harry Hancock-Davies and supported by the Reform UK Group**  
**Motion: Establishment of a Fraud Investigation Team**

Currently, Shropshire Council has no dedicated fraud investigation team. As a result, the authority faces a significant risk of under-detecting and under-reporting fraud. This may lead to fraudulent claims or practices going unchallenged, minimal recovery of public funds, and a growing perception that fraud within Shropshire is unlikely to be detected. This may exacerbate financial pressures and erode public confidence in the Council's ability to safeguard resources.

This Council notes with concern the findings of the 2023 report by Crowe, Peters &

Peters, and the University of Plymouth, which estimate that annual losses to the UK's public sector amount to £50.2 billion. Of this, £8.8 billion (excluding benefits) is attributed to fraud within Local Authorities. The largest risks are identified in procurement (£5bn), housing tenancy fraud (£2bn), and payroll fraud (£1.2bn). Additionally, benefit-related fraud accounts for £2.9bn, including Housing Benefit fraud (£700m) and Council Tax Reduction fraud (£60m).

**This Council believes:**

That taking proactive steps to prevent, detect, and address fraud is essential to protecting public funds, ensuring fairness, and maintaining trust within local government.

That a dedicated fraud team, whether internally managed or externally contracted—subject to a feasibility assessment—can provide a robust structure for risk-based investigation, prevention, and enforcement while positively contributing to the Council's financial resilience.

**This Council notes:**

The support provided to local authorities by the Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally strategy, which sets out a coordinated national framework supported by the Public Sector Fraud Authority (PSFA) and the National Audit Office (NAO).

The effectiveness of focused fraud investigation and detection, as evidenced by the annual reports of the National Fraud Initiative.

That whilst the exceptional recovery ratios achieved in some large urban areas may not be matched in Shropshire, evidence from comparable councils suggests that even modest detection and recovery levels can result in net savings exceeding operational costs.

This Council recognises that every pound lost to fraud is a pound not being invested in our communities, public services, and adult social care. Fraud directly impacts the Council's ability to provide services to those in genuine need and adds stress to already stretched finances.

That from the 1 September 2025, the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 introduces a new corporate offence of failure to prevent fraud. This legislation places a duty on organisations to implement reasonable fraud prevention measures and holds them criminally liable for fraudulent acts committed by employees or agents

**Therefore, this Council resolves to:**

1. Establish a permanently dedicated and resourced Fraud Investigation Team, tasked with the detection, investigation, and recovery of monies lost through fraudulent activity, in compliance with the Council's governance and budgetary procedures.
2. Ensure the Team works closely with other relevant Council departments—such as procurement and Revenues & Benefits to maximise recovery and prevention efforts.
3. Where appropriate, pursue prosecutions to deliver a strong deterrent effect, ensuring that successful cases taken through the courts are publicised through the media to maximise deterrence, and that all work is carried out fully within the legislative framework available.
4. Develop partnerships with external agencies including the Police, HMRC, DWP, and other relevant organisations to strengthen investigations, prosecutions, and

the recovery of proceeds of crime.

5. Implement a timeline for the establishment and review of the Fraud Investigation Team, with periodic reporting to Full Council or the Audit Committee.

#### **14 Report of the Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority**

To receive the report of the Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority **REPORT TO FOLLOW**

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## Committee and Date

Council

INSERT NEXT MEETING DATE

## **COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2025**

**In the The Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ  
Times Not Specified**

**Responsible Officer:** Tim Ward

Email: [tim.ward@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:tim.ward@shropshire.gov.uk) Tel: 01743 257713

### **Present**

Councillors Duncan Borrowman and Heather Kidd (Leader)  
Councillors Gary Groves (Vice-Chair), Alex Wagner (Deputy Leader), Sho Abdul, Caroline Bagnall, Elizabeth Barker, Bernie Bentick, Neil Bentley, Ed Bird, Jeremy Blandford, Andy Boddington, Thomas Clayton, Susan Coleman, Rachel Connolly, Jamie Daniels, Rosemary Dartnall, David Davies, Pamela Davies, Andy Davis, Julian Dean, Joshua Dickin, Mandy Duncan, Greg Ebbs, Susan Eden, Donna Edmunds, Craig Emery, Brian Evans, Roger Evans, Adam Fejfer, Rhys Gratton, Andy Hall, Kate Halliday, Nick Hignett, Alan Holford, George Hollyhead, Ruth Houghton, Dawn Husemann, Peter Husemann, Benedict Jephcott, Robert Jones, Duncan Kerr, Christopher Lemon, Nigel Lumby, Brendan Mallon, Sarah Marston, David Minnery, Vicky Moore, Mark Morris, Alan Mosley, Malcolm Myles-Hook, James Owen, Mark Owen, Wendy Owen, Vivienne Parry, Ed Potter, Rosie Radford, Sharon Ritchie-Simmons, Carl Rowley, Charles Shackerley-Bennett, Colin Stanford, Jon Tandy, Colin Taylor, Dan Thomas, Teri Trickett, David Vasmer, Beverley Waite, David Walker, Sam Walmsley, Alison Williams and Rob Wilson

## **16 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tom Dainty, Harry Hancock-Davies and Chris Naylor

## **17 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

Members were reminded that they must not participate in the discussion or voting on any matter in which they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and should leave the room prior to the commencement of the debate.

## **18 Minutes**

### **RESOLVED:**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2025, as circulated with the agenda papers, be approved and signed as a correct record.

## **19 Announcements**

### **Chairman's Engagements**

The Chairman referred Members to the list of official engagements carried out by himself and the Vice Chairman since the last meeting of the Council on 22 May 2025, which had been circulated at the meeting.

### **Birthday Honours**

The Chairman congratulated all those awarded honours in the 2025 Birthday Honours List

## **20 Public Questions**

The Chairman advised that public questions had been received from Andrew Sceats, Tamarin Bibow and John Palmer. A copy of the questions and the responses provided are available from the web page for the meeting

[Responses to Public Questions.pdf](#)

## **21 Questions from Members**

The Speaker advised that the following questions had been received in accordance with Procedure Rule 15.

Question from Councillor Susan Coleman regarding the Connect on Demand Service. By way of supplementary question Councillor Coleman asked what the Administration was doing to push for the additional funding required. The Portfolio Holder assured her that they would continue to lobby the county's MPs to push for more revenue funding from the government whenever they're able to.

Question from Councillor Brendan Mallon regarding safety around the installation of battery energy storage systems. By way of supplementary question Councillor Mallon asked What is the liability on the Council, given that we do not have robust set of requirements and standards to work to. The Portfolio Holder assured Councillor Mallon that safety matters were fully considered during the planning process but that Officers would consider the points that he had raised.

Question from Councillor Carl Rowley regarding expenditure on the North West Relief Road. There was no supplementary question

## **22 Financial Outturn 2024/25**

It was proposed by Councillor Roger Evans, Portfolio Holder for Finance and seconded by Councillor Sho Abdul, that the report of the Executive Director Resources, and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

**RESOLVED:**

In respect of the revenue budget:

- a) Note that the outturn for overall variance in the year is £34.230m above budget.
- b) Note that the consequent level of the General Fund Balance is £4.823m
- c) Note the use of £7.726m of Earmarked Reserves and Provisions and the resulting level of earmarked reserves of £25.455m (£18.762m if the balances held by schools are excluded).
- d) Note the £47.194m savings delivery achieved over the year
- e) Note that the combination of earmarked and un-earmarked (General) reserves of £33.275m is below a level that would be regarded as appropriate, taking into account local circumstances. The MTFS sets out an agreed plan to restore these balances to safer levels.

In respect of ringfenced funding:

- f) Note the performance of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) - £3.124m (13%) surplus outturn for 2024/25 on £23.054m turnover, and the resulting level of the HRA reserve of £14.861m.
- g) Note the outturn for the DSG and the consequent level of the DSG reserve.
- h) Note that the level of school balances has decreased by £0.647m, from £7.340m in 2023/24 to £6.693m, in the financial year

In respect of the capital programme:

- i) Approve the net budget variations of £1.946m to the 2024/25 capital programme (in Appendix 9) and the re-profiled 2024/25 capital budget of £112.640m.
- j) Approve the re-profiled capital budgets of £152.574m for 2025/26, including slippage of £4.819m from 2024/25, £72.350m for 2026/27 and £45.212m for 2027/28 as detailed in Appendix 13.
- k) Accept the outturn expenditure set out in Appendices 10 and 11 of £107.820m representing 95.7% of the revised capital budget for 2024/25.
- l) Approve retaining a balance of capital receipts set aside of £24.432m as at 31st March 2025 to generate a one-off Minimum Revenue Provision saving of £0.222m in 2025/26

**23 Annual Treasury Report 2024/25**

It was proposed by Councillor Roger Evans, Portfolio Holder for Finance and seconded by Councillor Sho Abdul, that the report of the Executive Director Resources, and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

**RESOLVED:**

That Council

3.1. Approve the actual 2024/25 prudential and treasury indicators contained in the report.

3.2. Note the annual treasury management report for 2024/25

**24 Annual Assurance Report of the Audit Committee to Council 2024/25**

It was proposed by Councillor Duncan Kerr, Chair of the Audit Committee and seconded by Councillor Kate Halliday, that the report of the Executive Director Resources, and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

**RESOLVED:**

That Council

1. Accept the contents and judgements in this report
2. Agree to change the name of the Committee to that of the Audit and Governance Committee
3. Agree that the membership of the Committee be increased so that it comprises nine councillors, and one Independent non-voting person.
4. Agree to appoint the additional four Councillors in accordance with the requirements of political balance.

**25 Constitution of Committees and the Allocation of Seats to Political Groups - Audit Committee**

It was proposed by the Leader Councillor Heather Kidd and seconded by Councillor James Owen, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Leisure that the report of the Service Director – Legal, Governance and Planning, and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

By way of amendment Councillor Duncan Kerr proposed that the committee did not allow substitute members. This was seconded by Councillor Kate Halliday. On taking a vote the amendment was not supported

**RESOLVED:**

1. That Council approves the change of name of the Audit Committee to the Audit and Governance Committee and an increase in its membership from five to nine members.
2. That the Council confirms the constitution of committees and the allocation of seats to each of the political groups for the remainder of the 2025/26 municipal year and the allocation of seats between the political groups, as set out in Appendix 1.
3. That the leaders of the Liberal Democrat, Reform UK and Conservative groups notify officers which members will take up the additional Audit Committee seats available to their group.

## **26 Pyrolysis Second Site Increase in Budget**

It was proposed by the Councillor Rob Wilson, Portfolio Holder for Transport and Economic Growth and seconded by Councillor Alex Wagner, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Communities that the report of the Assistant Director – Transformation and Efficiency, and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Economic Growth stated that he wished to add an additional recommendation: -

- 3.3 The council will not utilise biomass from household green waste or food waste unless this is explicitly approved by the Service Director for Strategy in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Transport & Economic Growth.

### **RESOLVED:**

1. That Council approve an increase in budget of the pyrolysis project by around £1.3m from £2m as outlined in the council paper, approved by full Council on 21st September 2023, to £3.3 million.
2. That Council delegate authority to the Service Director Strategy in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Economic Growth, to negotiate and agree the terms of any and all agreements necessary for the implementation and ongoing operation of the project.
3. That the Council will not utilise biomass from household green waste or food waste unless this is explicitly approved by the Service Director for Strategy in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Transport & Economic Growth.

## **27 Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy**

It was proposed by the Leader Councillor Heather Kidd and seconded by Councillor Ruth Houghton, Portfolio Holder for Social Care that the report of the Assistant Director – Transformation and Efficiency, and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

**RESOLVED:**

That Council

1. Agree to approve and publish the Safe Accommodation Strategy 2025 as set out in Appendix 2
2. Agrees this document will be incorporated into a partnership-wide domestic abuse strategy, with clearly defined actions to address the recommendations set out in the 2024 Needs Assessment

**28 Withdrawal of Local Plan from Examination and Next Steps**

It was proposed by the Councillor David Walker, Portfolio Holder for Planning and seconded by Councillor Ben Jephcott that the report of the Service Director – Legal, Governance and Planning, and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

By way of amendment Councillor Rachel Connolly proposed that the following be added to the recommendations:

In the light of the additional risk of speculative development, coupled with the large number of new councillors, council asks for urgent advice and guidance for all councillors on how to best represent residents concerns and demands as large scale planning applications are mooted, received and processed, with a view to helping both members and officers to get the best outcomes possible for existing residents and our environment.

Councillor Walker indicated that he would accept the amendment

**RESOLVED:**

1. That Council agrees the withdrawal of the draft Local Plan (2016-2038) from the Examination in accordance with Section 27 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
2. That in the light of the additional risk of speculative development, coupled with the large number of new councillors, council asks for urgent advice and guidance for all councillors on how to best represent residents concerns and demands as large scale planning applications are mooted, received and processed, with a view to helping both members and officers to get the best outcomes possible for existing residents and our environment

**29 Appointments to Outside Bodies**

It was proposed by Councillor Alex Wagner, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Communities and seconded by the Leader Councillor Heather Kidd that the report of the Service Director – Legal, Governance and Planning, and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

**RESOLVED:**

That Council

- a. Note the agreed appointments as attached at Appendix 1 & 2.
- b. Note that Councillor Heather Kidd has replaced Councillor Roger Evans on the Local Government Association General Assembly and Councillor Dawn Husemann has been appointed to the vacancies on the Local Government Association General Assembly and the County Council Network Council.

**30 Special Responsibility Allowances for Deputy Portfolio Holders**

It was proposed by the Leader Councillor Heather Kidd and seconded by Councillor Alex Wagner, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Communities that the report of the Service Director – Legal, Governance and Planning, and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That Council approve the payment of allowances for up to 10 Deputy Portfolio Holders and that the Member Allowances Scheme in Part 6 of the Constitution be amended accordingly.
2. That the Monitoring Officer seeks to identify members for appointment to the Independent Remuneration Panel at a future meeting of the Council so a comprehensive review of the scheme of members allowances can be undertaken

**31 LGPS - Scheme of Delegation**

It was proposed by Councillor Gary Groves, Chairman, Pensions Committee and seconded by Councillor Roger Evans, Portfolio Holder for Finance that the report of the Pensions Investment and Responsible Investment Manager, and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Responsibility for Functions, set out in Part 3 of the Constitution and the Scheme of Delegations, set out in Part 8 of the Constitution be updated to allow either the Section 151 Officer or LGPS Senior Officer to represent Shropshire County Pension Fund at the LGPS Central Shareholders Forum and vote on behalf of the Fund in the absence of the Chair of the Pensions Committee.

**32 Appointment to Committees**

It was proposed by the Chairman Councillor Duncan Borrowman and seconded by the Vice Chairman Councillor Gary Groves that the amendments to committee membership as set out in the agenda papers be agreed.

**RESOLVED:**

That the amendments to committee membership as set out in the agenda papers be agreed.

**33 Motions**

**The following motion was received from Councillor Ed Potter and supported by the Conservative Group**

We all know that litter blights our roadside verges. This includes an increasing number of disused and broken temporary road signs which have been left behind and often over time lost in the undergrowth along our verges and roadside. In the Loton division this is a particular problem along the A5 and A458 as well as the more rural side roads. Once the growing season starts these signs often get covered by the vegetation and then are subsequently damaged by the hedge cutters which cut the verges. It would make sense when there are road closures on these busy roads that these disused highways signs, sandbags and traffic cones are removed. On the more minor roads and on traffic islands these could be collected by highways contractors whilst going about their daily routines and deposited back at highways depots for reuse or recycling. It is important to our residents that we all take civic pride in where we live and these simple actions of removing these discarded items will make a big difference.

1. Request that Shropshire Council Highways adopt a policy instructing all Highways works teams and contractors including utility companies who are permitted to work on the Highway remove disused and broken signs left behind by previous work schemes
2. Ask the Chief Executive to write to the Chief Executive of National Highways to request their work teams and contractors operating in Shropshire adopt the same approach.

**RESOLVED:**

That Council

1. Request that Shropshire Council Highways adopt a policy instructing all Highways works teams and contractors including utility companies who are permitted to work on the Highway remove disused and broken signs left behind by previous work schemes

2. Ask the Chief Executive to write to the Chief Executive of National Highways to request their work teams and contractors operating in Shropshire adopt the same approach.

**Motion received from Councillor Julian Dean and supported by the Green & Progressive Independent Group**

**Planning for a better Shropshire**

Shropshire Council recognises the need:

- to deliver the right homes, at the right price, in the right places to address the housing affordability crisis
- to provide clean energy infrastructure to support the UK's future energy needs
- to rapidly deliver projects that will help our natural environment to recover such that the UK is no longer one of the most nature depleted countries in the world.

We believe these aims can all be delivered alongside robust local decision making given the right mix of regulation and funding.

**Council notes:**

- Revisions to the 'standard method' for calculating housing targets - which has increased the housing target for Shropshire from 1070 to 1994 - but with no target for social or affordable homes, and no significant change to viability assessments which result in affordable homes schemes being scrapped or reduced. The adopted 'stock based' Standard Method fails to properly assess this area's housing need or reflect the ability to grow and provide supporting infrastructure.
- The Planning and Infrastructure Bill currently passing through Parliament. Despite pleas from across the environmental sector and cross-party support for amendments, the Bill continues to include damaging changes to planning rules such that the environmental movement has now come together to call on ministers to 'scrap part 3'.
- Proposed changes to planning decision making which will reduce the power of councils and councillors to act on behalf of their communities - this despite the fact that, nationally, 1.4 million homes had been granted planning permission since 2007 but not been built.

**Council believes:**

The combined effect of changes introduced by the government since last July, even when taking in to account the welcome additional funding for the Affordable Homes Programme (£39bn over 10 years), will in all likelihood fail to deliver the homes people need in Shropshire, damage efforts to recover our natural environment and further erode community trust in decision making.

**Council resolves to:**

1. Request the Leader of the Council to write to the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, relevant Secretaries of State, as well as local MPs, expressing these concerns, and calling for the withdrawal of part 3 of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill.
2. Ask our MPs to oppose measures in part 3 of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill and, should these remain in the Bill, to vote against at final reading.
3. Request portfolio holders to accelerate completion of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Local Transport Plan and to ensure that these policies, together with Shrewsbury Moves, are made material considerations in planning as soon as possible, and ahead of any timetable for the revised Local Plan.
4. Request portfolio holders hold urgent meetings with Registered Providers to maximise the benefit to Shropshire from the uplift to the Affordable Homes Programme.
5. Share this resolution with neighbouring councils, local civic groups, nature organisations and the local press, to encourage wider opposition and coordinated advocacy.

By way of amendment Councillor David Walker proposed the following

**Planning for a better Shropshire**

Shropshire Council recognises the need:

- to deliver sufficient homes, at the right price, in the right places to provide more affordable homes for Shropshire people
- to provide clean energy infrastructure to support the UK's future energy needs and economic growth
- to rapidly deliver projects that will help our natural environment to recover such that the UK is no longer one of the most nature depleted countries in the world.

We believe these aims can all be delivered alongside robust local decision making given the right mix of regulation and funding.

**Council notes:**

- Revisions to the Standard Method for calculating housing need provide a target that will exceed this rural county's capacity to deliver housing, employment and infrastructure.
- Replacement of out of date and development of new Supplementary Policy Documents (SPDs) is underway with a target date of September. The new SPDs will help provide policy clarity while the new local plan is taken forward.

- Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) will soon go out for Public Consultation on the 6th of August. Member briefings will be organised to coincide with that.
- Successive governments have under resourced the planning system and that has weakened capacity to process major and complex applications quickly.
- The Planning and Infrastructure Bill does not take into account the advice of the Office for Environmental Protection in May 2025 that the current wording of the bill would roll back species protection.
- There is no timetable in the Bill for Environmental Delivery Plans (EDPs).
- Since 2007, 1.4 million homes with planning permission have not been built [1m since 2015 according to the Planning Portal Market Index]

**Council believes:**

The combined effect of changes introduced by the government since last July, even when taking in to account the welcome additional funding for the Affordable Homes Programme (£39bn over 10 years), will in all likelihood fail to deliver the homes Shropshire people need in Shropshire, damage efforts to recover our natural environment and further erode community trust in decision making.

**Council resolves to:**

1. Request the Leader of the Council to write to the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, relevant Secretaries of State, as well as local MPs, expressing these concerns, reiterate the concerns in the planning reform consultation responses and calling for the withdrawal of part 3 of the Planning and infrastructure Bill.
2. Ask our MPs to oppose measures in part 3 of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill that reduce protections for the environment.
3. Request portfolio holders to accelerate completion of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Local Transport Plan and to ensure that these policies, together with Shrewsbury Moves, are made material considerations in planning decisions as soon as possible.
4. Request portfolio holders hold urgent meetings with Registered Providers to maximise the benefit to Shropshire from the uplift to the Affordable Homes Programme.
5. Share this resolution with neighbouring councils, local civic groups, nature organisations and the local press, to encourage wider opposition and coordinated advocacy.

Councillor Dean indicated that he was prepared to accept the amendment

**RESOLVED**

1. Request the Leader of the Council to write to the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, relevant Secretaries of State, as well as local MPs, expressing these concerns, reiterate the concerns in the planning reform consultation responses and calling for the withdrawal of part 3 of the Planning and infrastructure Bill.
2. Ask our MPs to oppose measures in part 3 of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill that reduce protections for the environment.
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4. Request portfolio holders hold urgent meetings with Registered Providers to maximise the benefit to Shropshire from the uplift to the Affordable Homes Programme.
5. Share this resolution with neighbouring councils, local civic groups, nature organisations and the local press, to encourage wider opposition and coordinated advocacy.

Signed ..... (Chairman)

Date: .....



**Committee and Date**  
**Council**  
**25<sup>th</sup> September 2025**

Item

Public



## SEND and AP Strategy 2025 – 2029 and Outcomes Framework

|                                           |                              |      |              |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------|------|--------------|
| <b>Responsible Officer:</b>               | David Shaw                   |      |              |
| email:                                    | David.shaw@shropshire.gov.uk | Tel: | 01743 256479 |
| <b>Cabinet Member</b> (Portfolio Holder): | Andy Hall                    |      |              |

### 1. Synopsis

- 1.1 The SEND and AP Strategy and the Outcomes Framework, is designed to support children, young people and their families to achieve their best life. It seeks to provide a coherent and consistent direction for practitioners, providers and partners who support children, young people and families. This paper will explain how this will be achieved and seeks the endorsement of Council for this approach.

### 2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Shropshire Plan 2022-25 is a strategic plan that sets out how we are working towards a healthy and sustainable Shropshire. Participation across services is at the heart of the agenda and key to its success. It involves communities, businesses, health partners and the public sector all working together to address challenges, propose solutions and make informed choices that drive positive change for the benefit of all.
- 2.2 The SEND and AP (Alternative Provision) Strategy is aimed at supporting the SEND and AP Area Partnership, who are the strategic leaders in Shropshire with

responsibility for SEND and AP through [the SEND and AP Partnership Board](#), to improve and streamline all services for children and young people (0-25) with special educational needs and or disability, including looked after children and young people and care leavers with SEND to age 25. This is an overarching strategy that involves a number of partners working together, from Education, Health and Care services, as well as a range of commissioned providers. This strategy builds upon the previous strategy, national and local developments, plus direct feedback from children, young people, families and professionals.

- 2.3 The outcomes framework aims to take a single, unified approach to improving outcomes for children and young people, including tracking impact across all the services that are part of the SEND and AP Area Partnership. This will ensure that we are aware of the impact of these services on children, young people and their families and care givers.
- 2.4 The strategy and outcomes framework are aimed at improving services and to ensure that services work together effectively to deliver better outcomes. The documents will be underpinned by a clear system wide action plan covering each of the priority areas led by a multi-agency workstream. The action planning approach employed for the Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) provides a clear example of this and is available here [Local area SEND inspection | Shropshire Council](#)
- 2.5 The strategy and outcomes framework has been developed with, and is fully endorsed by, the Shropshire Parent and Carer Council (PACC) our parent carer forum, SEND Independent Advice Support Service (SENDIASS), alongside children, young people and families with lived experience, early years settings, schools, colleges, frontline practitioners, elected members, the voluntary and community sector, and the NHS Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Integrated Care System. These partners are represented on the [SEND and AP Partnership Board](#) and/or have statutory duties to deliver services for children and young people with SEND, including those accessing AP.
- 2.6 The feedback from engagement activities during the development phases and the public consultation was supportive of the Strategy and the overarching outcomes identified in the Outcomes Framework. Once approved, the implementation and delivery plans will be established in conjunction with multi-agency workstreams as outlined in 2.4.
- 2.7 Several respondents felt more information was needed about how the outcomes would be monitored. From this, it was recognised that more work was needed to provide a robust and measurable framework for SEND. This includes clear steps to achieve the outcomes statements, measures that are specific, measurable, and relevant to track progress and reference data sources as per the SEND Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. This has been developed and included within the outcomes framework.
- 2.8 Some respondents noted the need to not confuse outcomes for the child and young person with those of the parent carer. This has resulted in changes being made to reflect this.

- 2.9 There is also a commitment to establishing a programme of engagement that delivers the council's co-production strategy and working collaboratively with the partnership. This will encourage and enable everyone to have a voice in feedback and development work.
- 2.10 Several respondents identified that some outcome measures would not lead to measurable outcomes being easily identified (e.g. "I have opportunities to experience joy as a family"). In collaboration with the parent carer council, work has taken place to improve the clarity of this work.
- 2.11 The full Outcomes Framework (appendix 2) has been refined significantly following the feedback from the public consultation with input from PACC, as outlined in 2.7-2.10. This has included streamlining the high levels outcomes from 7 to 6 and refining the wording across each area to reflect questions relating to the expectation on parent carers. Mechanisms to gather the views of parent carers and children and young people at the point of annual review have been developed as part of the outcomes framework. This will enable the SEND and AP Partnership to receive on a termly basis information from key performance indicators. This will significantly strengthen the voice of parent carers and young people in supporting strategic change with respect to SEND and AP.
- 2.12 Following feedback from parent carers, the partnership recognised the need for the Outcomes Framework to be focused on the outcomes for children, young people and their families. Performance indicators for SEND and AP partners would be developed as part of the area SEND and AP implementation plan.
- 2.12 Following the wide range of engagement activity, including with DfE, NHS England and public consultation, the Area SEND and AP Partnership believe it is important to ratify the work completed to date recognising that the Outcomes Framework should always be a 'live working document' as we continually refine our understanding and raise our expectations on 'what good looks like' for children and young people with SEND and those accessing AP, families and partners. As a result, some of the specific measures may be subject to change in the future in order to address where gaps in information are detected or external changes necessitate some amendment. However, the Outcomes Framework as presented will enable the partnership to receive valuable information with respect to the strengths and weaknesses within the current SEND and AP system.
- 2.13 All of the changes, refinements and additions made following the public consultation have been collated and a 'You said, we did' update is being finalised so this can be added to the Local Offer SEND Strategy public website. This will demonstrate that we have listened to feedback and show how we have acted upon the feedback.

### 3. Recommendations

That Council

- 3.1 Consider and approve the final draft SEND and AP Strategy 2025 – 2029
- 3.2 Adopt the Outcomes Framework as a 'live working document', noting the ambitions to focus on improving outcomes for children, young people and families.
- 3.3 To note that Cabinet will receive an update in 6 months on the development of the implementation plans and refinement of the multi-agency workstreams to deliver the strategy. This should also include a progress update with respect to the development of measurable outcomes and further refinement of the Outcomes Framework.

## Report

### 4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

| <i>Risk</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <i>Mitigation</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Without having an approved SEND and AP Strategy and Outcomes Framework, there is a risk that work to strengthen outcomes for children and young people with SEND will not form part of a cohesive approach to improvement and will diminish accountability. This would reflect poorly at the point of SEND Area inspection as this would lead to less effective outcomes for children and young people and their families. | Development of the strategy has considered and taken account of a wide range of feedback from children, young people, families and professionals. Local and national best practice has also been considered and included where appropriate.<br><br>Approval and endorsement of the SEND and AP strategy and outcomes framework is sought from Cabinet and then Council. |
| On-going development and implementation is not in line with the Local Authority's co-production strategy, implementation is likely to be less effective.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Agreement to ensure development and implementation of the SEND and AP strategy and outcomes framework is in line with the Co-Production Strategy.                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

## 5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. Shropshire Council is currently managing an unprecedented financial position as budgeted for within the Medium Term Financial Strategy approved by Council on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2025 and detailed in our monitoring position presented to Cabinet on a monthly basis. This demonstrates that significant management action is required over the remainder of the financial year to ensure the Council's financial survival. While all Cabinet Reports provide the financial implications of decisions being taken, this may change as officers review the overall financial situation and make decisions aligned to financial survivability. Where non-essential spend is identified within the Council, this will be reduced. This may involve
- scaling down initiatives,
  - changing the scope,
  - delaying implementation, or
  - extending delivery timescales.
- 5.2. Involving partners in the development of support for children and young people with SEND will lead to more effective provision and promote early intervention.
- 5.3. Any costs will be contained within current budgets, whether Council or Grant funded, such as the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). It is expected that delivery of the strategy will actively support the deficit recovery programme on the DSG. The DSG is in a deficit position of c.£17.6m at the end of the 2024/25 financial year. Council officers are actively engaged in discussions with the DfE regarding strategies to manage the deficit, however, this is recognised as a national challenge.
- 5.4. The deficit position is excluded from the Council main revenue budget through the "DSG statutory override", which refers to a temporary accounting measure in England that allows local authorities to exclude deficits in their Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) from their main revenue budgets. This override was initially implemented to address financial pressures on high needs budgets for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and has very recently been extended until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2028.
- 5.5. Extending the DSG statutory override will enable the Government to start a "phased transition process" to reform the SEND system, according to a **consultation document from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government**. This will include working with local authorities to manage their dedicated school grant (DSG) deficits.

## 6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1. Where we are able to use Microsoft Teams for meetings to reduce climate impact, this takes place.
- 6.2. Work is developed digitally to avoid the use of paper.
- 6.3. The strategy directly promotes the development of local provision and increasing independence for children and young people, therefore enabling children and young people to be educated as close to their local area as possible. This will bring positive benefits in reducing the time spent travelling and distances covered, enabling more children and young people to travel independently. This will also bring benefits in relation to climate change and the reduced use of vehicles, including single occupancy vehicles.

## 7. Background

- 7.1. Ofsted/CQC expect the local area partnership to update and publish its strategic plan based on the recommendations set out in the outcomes of the Area SEND Inspection report, national best practice and local factors. This enables local areas to demonstrate they are providing effective strategic partnership working to improve the experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The strategy and outcomes framework has been informed by all of these aspects.
- 7.2. The Shropshire SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Strategy 2025-29 builds on previous strategies, such as the [SEND Strategy 2020-2025](#), and incorporates valuable feedback from the Ofsted/CQC area SEND revisit inspection, the Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) and the national SEND and AP improvement plan as well as feedback from the SEND Area Partnership's own self-evaluation. This involved key partners including parent carers from the SEND community.

## 8. Additional Information

- 8.1 The development of the strategy and Outcomes Framework has followed a wide range of stakeholder engagement activities, culminating in a public consultation from October 2024 – December 2024. This process enabled Local Area leaders to consider the wide ranging national reforms planned or underway in this area, alongside the key local priorities identified. The development process is outlined on page 9 of the strategy and has been included as an extract below.

## How have we developed our strategy and outcomes framework?



| August 2023 to January 2024                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | March 2024                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | May 2024                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | June to August 2024                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | September to December 2024                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | January to February 2025                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnership Local Area Self evaluation (SEF) consultation meetings</li> <li>Review and consideration of over 2000 responses from young people (11-18) around youth services in Shropshire. c.10% of young people who responded identified that they had a disability.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consideration of national SEND and AP Improvement Plan, including learning from participation in the SEND and AP Change Programme</li> <li>Draft Outcomes Framework V1 presented to Partnership Board</li> <li>Local Area SEF findings feed into development of SEND &amp; AP Strategy and actions prioritised</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Draft Local Area SEF presented to Partnership Board and shared with DfE/NHSE</li> <li>Early draft SEND and AP Strategy and Outcomes Framework presented to Partnership Board</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Area SEF finalised and shared with Partnership Board</li> <li>Draft SEND and AP Strategy and Outcomes Framework revisited with Partner representatives and prepared for public consultation</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Updated Draft SEND and AP Strategy and Outcomes Framework shared with Partnership Board in preparation for public consultation</li> <li>Public Consultation (7th October to 6th December)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update and refinement of the Local Area SEF</li> <li>Engagement work to develop the final SEND and AP Strategy and Outcomes Framework based upon findings from consultation, work with education settings, health and care professionals and Parent Carers.</li> </ul> |

8.2 The draft versions of the documents shared during the public consultation are also available here [SEND Strategy | Shropshire Council](#)

8.3 A 'You said, we did' update is also being developed for the Local Offer that will outline the feedback received through the engagement and public consultation and identify where changes and/or additions to the strategy and Outcomes Framework have been made.

8.4 The full Outcomes Framework will continue to be used as a live working document, with regular updates back to the SEND and AP Partnership Board, to enable a responsive approach to refining and further developing the detailed indicators to be used.

## 9. Conclusions

9.1. The Shropshire SEND and AP Strategy and Outcomes Framework details the shared commitment to ensuring that all children and young people with SEND and those accessing AP in Shropshire are healthy, happy, safe and able to achieve their potential to lead a fulfilling life.

### Appendices

**Appendix 1 – SEND and AP Strategy 2025 – 2029**

**Appendix 2 – Shropshire SEND and AP Outcomes Framework**

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# Shropshire SEND & Alternative Provision (AP) Strategy 2024 - 2029

This strategy sets the direction and commitment from the Shropshire Area SEND and AP Partnership to develop an inclusive system where everyone can thrive. We are committed to improving outcomes for children and young people aged 0-25 in Shropshire with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and those accessing alternative provision (AP). It builds upon the SEND Strategy co-produced with children, young people, families and professionals in 2021, incorporates feedback from the Ofsted/CQC Area SEND re-visit inspection from November 2022, the work completed to date through the Accelerated Progress Plan (APP), the national SEND and AP Improvement Plan published March 2023 and the learning from the national SEND and AP Change Programme.

A wide variety of engagement and development sessions during 2023 included Developing Inclusive Practice days, Headteacher Briefing Sessions, Early Help drop-in sessions, direct feedback from children, young people and families to services, 24 hours of self-evaluation focus group activity and a final self-evaluation session with SEND and AP Partnership Board members in January 2024.

We recognise that many children and young people who access AP will have SEND, and we have, therefore, included AP within this strategy. Our commitment is to create a well-integrated, complementary and effective SEND and AP system in Shropshire.

## **Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)**

Children and young people with SEN all have learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn than most children and young people of the same age. These children and young people may need extra or different help from that given to others.

## **Alternative Provision (AP)**

Alternative provision helps children who need extra help to stay in and enjoy learning at their mainstream school or provides specialist places and support for those who would benefit from spending time away from their mainstream school.

## Our Shared Commitment



Cllr Andy Hall  
Portfolio Holder  
Education and  
Children



Cllr Ruth Houghton  
Portfolio Holder for  
Social Care



Cllr Bernie Bentick  
Portfolio Holder for Health  
and Public Protection



Rachel Robinson  
Executive Director  
Health Wellbeing and  
Prevention



Tanya Miles  
Executive Director (DASS)



David Shaw  
Director of Children's  
Services



Vanessa Whatley  
NHS ICB Executive  
Lead for SEND

The SEND and AP Partnership Board have developed this strategy and outcomes framework to support the very best outcomes for children, young people and their families to achieve their best life.

We know that nationally there is the need to improve provision for children and young people with SEND, and those who access AP. This is challenging within a local context. We have made many improvements to the provision for children and young people with SEND, but we recognise the need to strive further to secure the best possible outcomes for children and young people.

This work begins to define the strategic aims for SEND and AP in Shropshire and will be further developed through the identification of more precise outcomes measures. This will provide a coherent and consistent direction for practitioners, providers and those who support children and young people and support accountability.

To develop this strategy, we have sought to build and improve on the previous SEND strategy, acknowledging the changes in the current landscape and the impact that this has on children, young people and their families and practitioners seeking to support them. The current strategy was redrafted and consulted on, providing the wider community with the opportunity to feedback.

The SEND and AP Partnership Board recognise this is the beginning of a process. This strategy and outcomes framework will be the starting point for future work. It provides the foundations for further strengthening partnership working and co-production to enable children and young people and their families to thrive. We will need to create opportunities for honest conversations where improvements are needed and further develop a culture of trust and support where critical and constructive challenge is valued.

The strategy will be supported by the outcomes framework which describes how those working to support children and young people and their families can deliver the very best outcomes. This will need to be periodically reviewed and in order for this to be successful, it will need to be quality assured, updated and improved. This process is ongoing and informed by a regular programme of engagement with partners and the SEND community. Future actions will engage partners in developing a robust and measurable framework for SEND and AP and will set the agenda for future engagement.

To be successful, this strategy will support the full engagement of practitioners, families, children and young people. This will enable children, young people and their families to live their best life in line with the Shropshire Plan.



**Integrated  
Care System**  
Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin



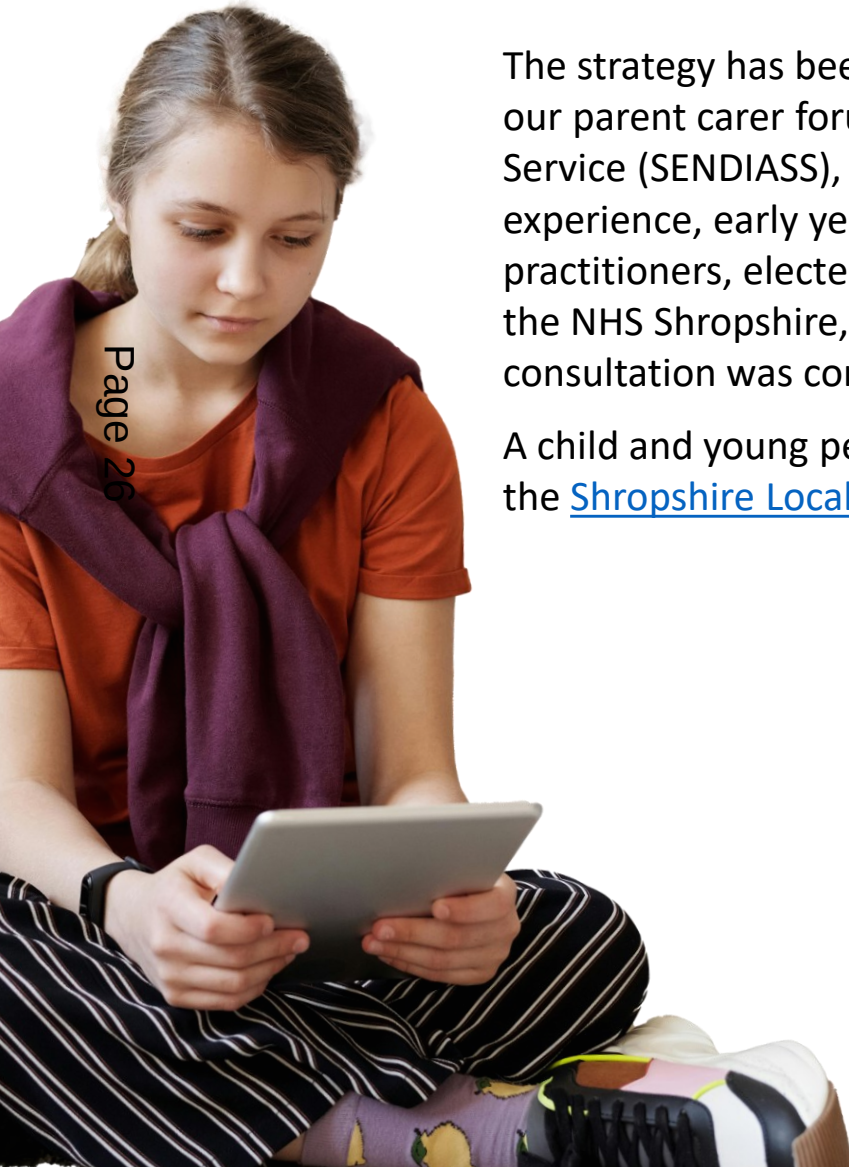
**Shropshire  
Council**

# Our strategy

# How have we developed our strategy and outcomes framework?

The strategy has been developed with the Parent and Carer Council (PACC) our parent carer forum, SEND Independent Advice Support Service (SENDIASS), alongside children, young people and families with lived experience, early years settings, schools, colleges, frontline practitioners, elected members, the voluntary and community sector, and the NHS Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Integrated Care System. Public consultation was completed between October and December 2024.

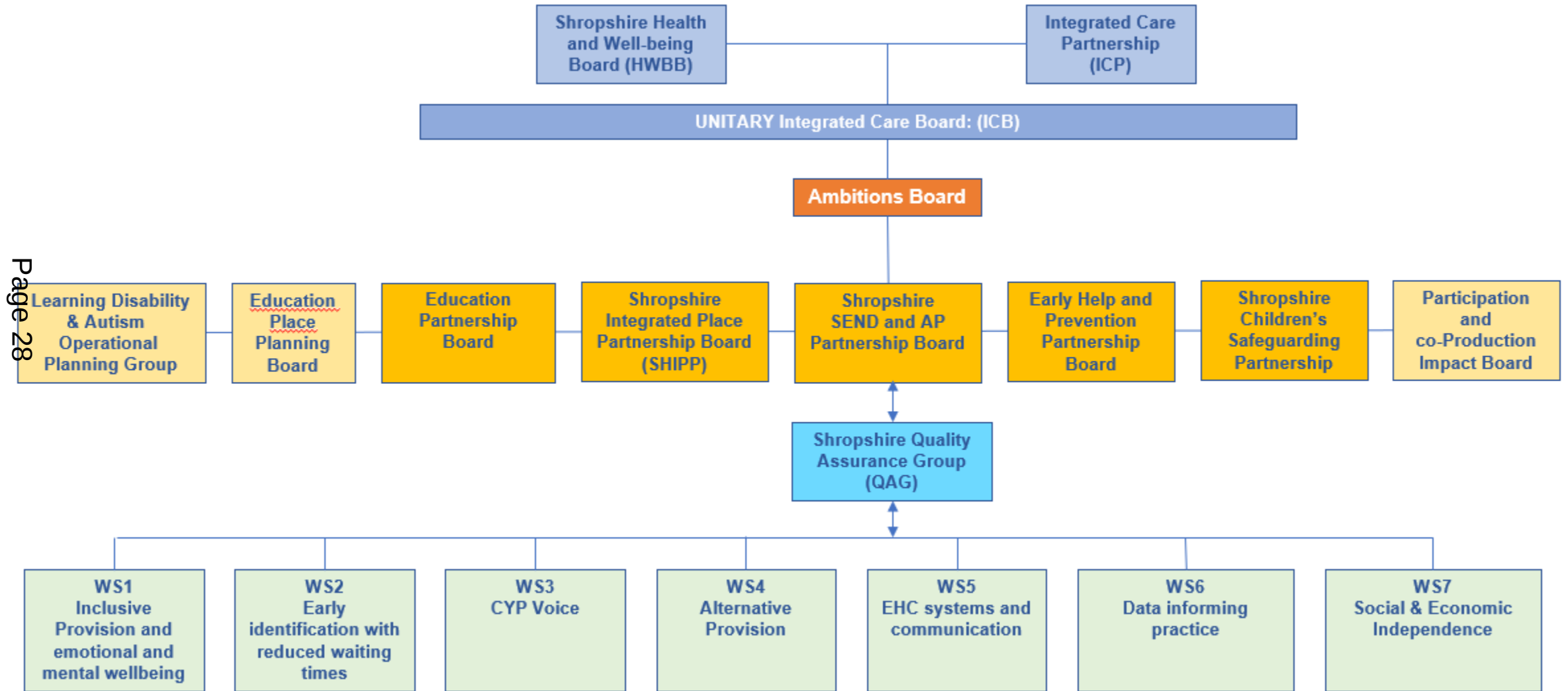
A child and young person guide to the strategy can be found on the [Shropshire Local Offer](#) and will be available in an easy read format.



# How have we developed our strategy and outcomes framework?

| August 2023 to January 2024                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | March 2024                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | May 2024                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | June to August 2024                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | September to December 2024                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | January to June 2025                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Partnership Local Area Self evaluation (SEF) consultation meetings</li></ul> <p>Review and consideration of over 2000 responses from young people (11-18) around youth services in Shropshire. c.10% of young people who responded identified that they had a disability.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Consideration of national SEND and AP Improvement Plan, including learning from participation in the SEND and AP Change Programme</li><li>Draft Outcomes Framework V1 presented to Partnership Board</li><li>Local Area SEF findings feed into development of SEND &amp; AP Strategy and actions prioritised</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Draft Local Area SEF presented to SEND &amp; AP Partnership Board and shared with DfE/NHSE</li><li>Early draft SEND and AP Strategy and Outcomes Framework presented to SEND &amp; AP Partnership Board</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Local Area SEF finalised and shared with SEND &amp; AP Partnership Board</li><li>Draft SEND and AP Strategy and Outcomes Framework revisited with Partner representatives and prepared for public consultation</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Updated Draft SEND and AP Strategy and Outcomes Framework shared with SEND &amp; AP Partnership Board in preparation for public consultation</li><li>Public Consultation (7th October to 6th December)</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Update and refinement of the Local Area SEF</li><li>Engagement work to develop the final SEND and AP Strategy and Outcomes Framework based upon findings from consultation, work with education settings, health and care professionals and Parent Carers.</li></ul> |

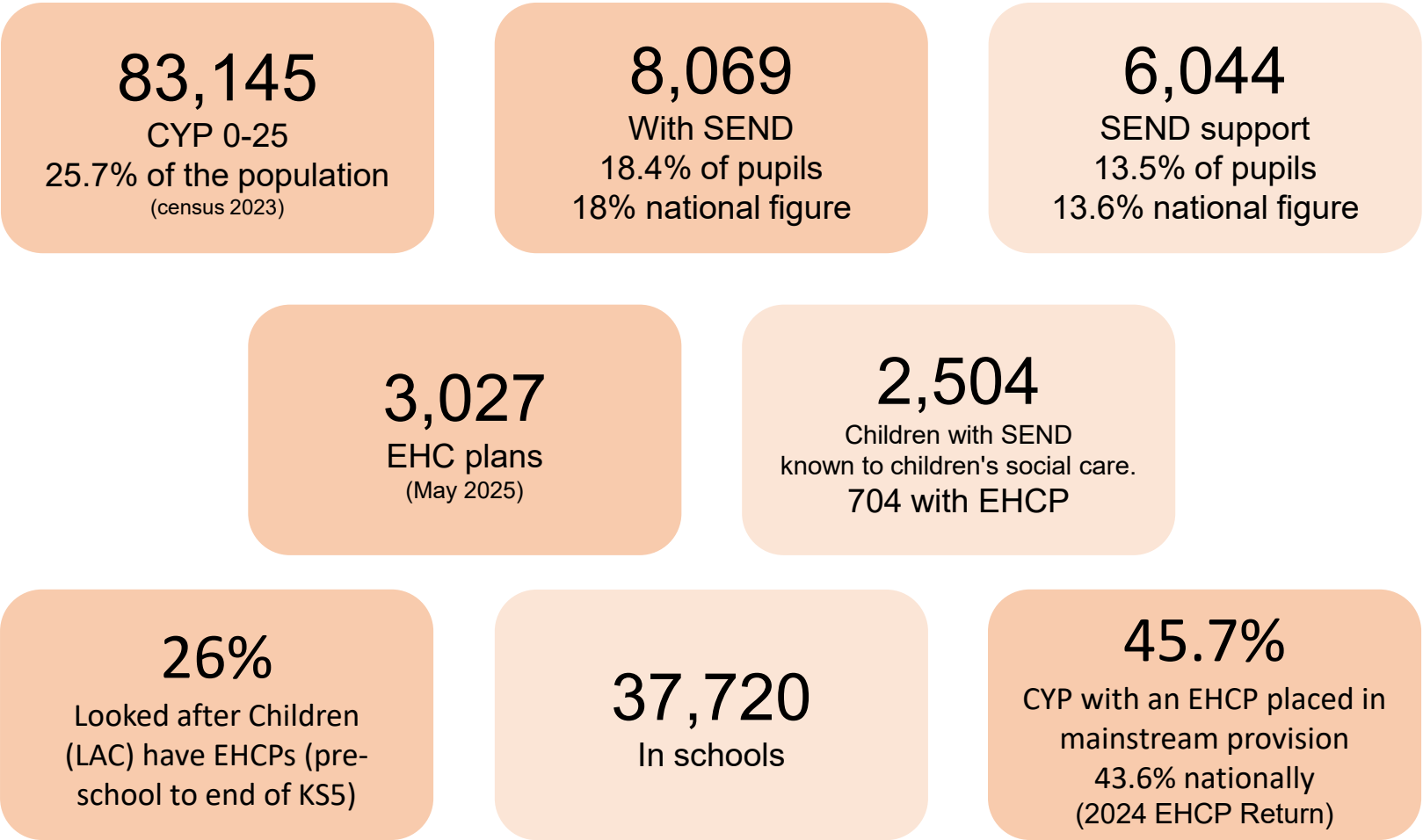
# Governance



## Local details/national comparison

Shropshire data on school age population with SEND.  
Data correct September 2024 unless otherwise stated.

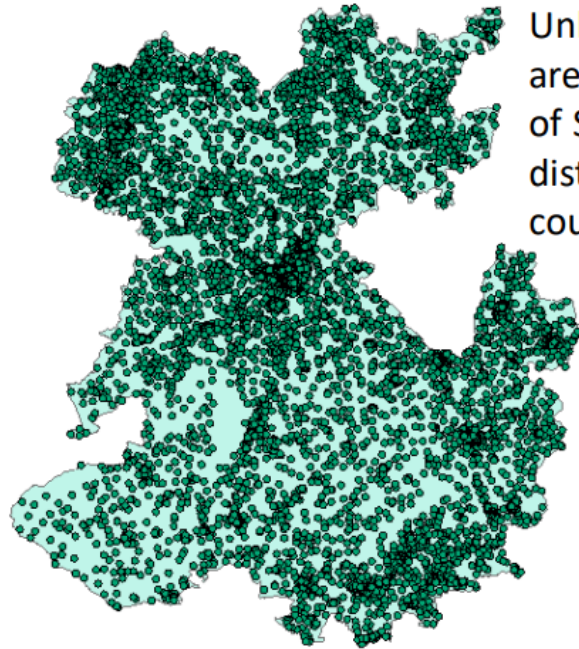
Education health and care plan (**EHCP**)  
Special educational needs and disability (**SEND**)  
Children and young people (**CYP**)



## Challenges of Rurality

### Shropshire Residential Postcodes

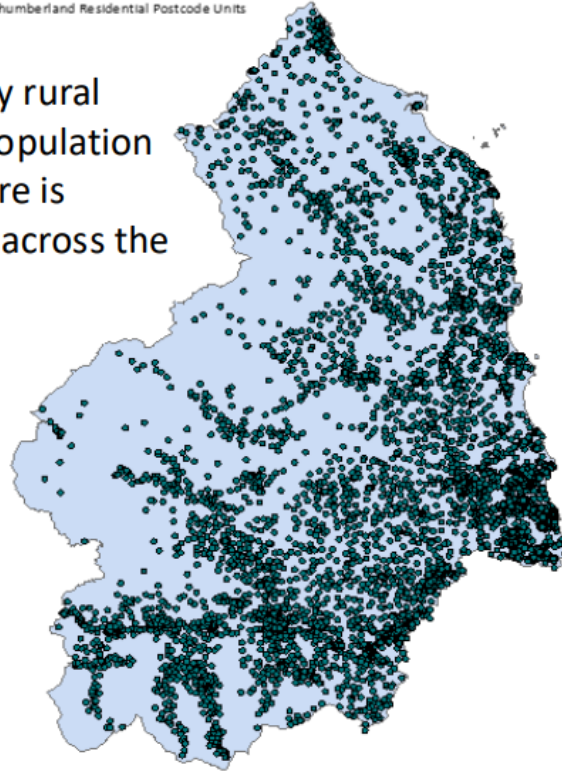
Shropshire Residential Postcode Units



Unlike many rural areas the population of Shropshire is distributed across the county

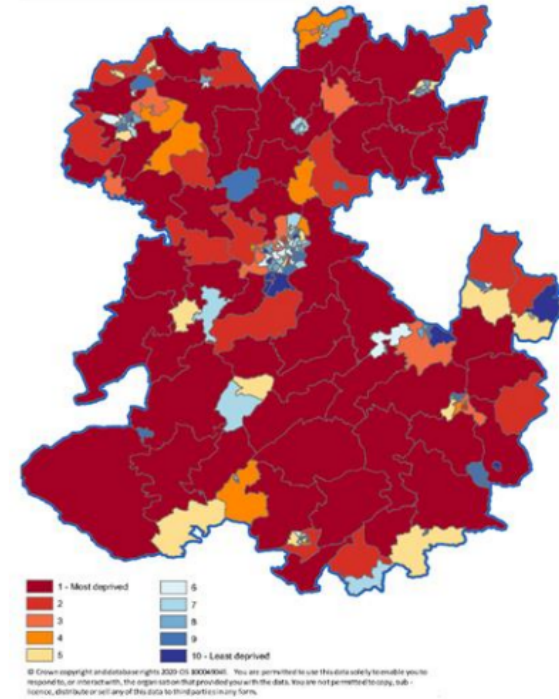
### Northumberland Residential Postcodes

Northumberland Residential Postcode Units



Making Shropshire one of the most deprived counties for access to services

IMD - Barriers to Housing & Services - National Decile



6,100 pupils transported to school each day

Using 140 operators

At a cost of £18,000,000 per year



98% of land is rural



3,240 miles of road.  
91% rural roads



57.2% live in rural areas



## Our shared commitment to the SEND and AP Vision

“Shropshire children and young people with SEND to be healthy, happy and safe, and able to achieve their potential to lead a fulfilling life.

We want them to have, and to expect, the same opportunities in life as other children and young people.

We want them to thrive and live their best life.”





# Our priorities

**The draft proposed system wide priorities will enable the implementation of our vision and address the themes emerging from our self-evaluation;**

1. Develop local, high quality, inclusive provision across the system. Including strengthening the graduated response and Shropshire Inclusive Practice Guidance whilst ensuring consistency and effectiveness of the emotional health and mental wellbeing offer in mainstream education settings, across all phases.
2. Enable early identification and the right help at the right time, including reducing waiting times for speech and language therapy and neurodiversity assessments.
3. Enable children and young people to communicate confidently, contribute to decisions, and feel visible and valued members of their community.
4. Develop a proactive, supportive and clear alternative provision offer.
5. Develop a system that makes sense and works together, improving co-production, communication and engagement with families and professionals from all services. Including improving the quality and timeliness of EHC plans, annual reviews and transition pathways.
6. Develop a data informed and intelligence rich approach.
7. Enable children and young people to feel visible and valued members of their community, ensuring they are supported to be as socially and economically independent as possible to achieve their next steps in life.

## Priority 1

Develop local, high quality, inclusive provision across the system. Including strengthening the graduated response and Shropshire Inclusive Practice Guidance whilst ensuring consistency and effectiveness of the emotional health and mental wellbeing offer in mainstream education settings, across all phases.

### Ambition

We will develop a continuum of high-quality local provision in Shropshire across education, health and social care, to better meet the needs of children and young people with SEND and those requiring AP.

### Delivery

- We will continue to develop a continuum of provision to integrate skills and knowledge between mainstream and special schools, including further development of SEND hubs in mainstream schools. This will include early years, schools and post 16.
- We will focus on building capacity within provisions to strengthen children and young people's participation in decision making. This will involve a focus on supporting mainstream provision to keep children and young people in their local communities through wrap around health and care support.
- We will maximise outreach and community services, such as those from alternative providers, special schools or community organisations, to strengthen our local provision offer.
- We will develop our social prescribing and other community support offers for families to support early identification, inclusion and participation, building on the development of the Early Help Hubs across Shropshire.
- We will build a thriving market for short break provision and encourage the use of personal budgets to support respite opportunities.
- We will establish a multi-agency forum to share best practice around inclusive education, health and care. This will include high quality professional development for staff.
- We will develop the Shropshire inclusive mainstream provision from early years, schools and Post 16 so that all education professionals and families know what will be universally available for children and young people with SEND, wherever you live in Shropshire. This will enable all education providers to play a key role in ensuring all children and young people with SEND are able to access excellent provision delivering a broad and balanced curriculum.

### Impact

- Most children and young people with SEND will successfully and regularly attend mainstream school. There will be further reduction in persistent/severe absence and a reduction in suspensions and exclusions. Children and young people in need of additional support from AP will be supported in mainstream, or return to and be successful in, mainstream provision.
- Fewer children and young people are placed out of Shropshire for their education placement because their education, health and care needs are met locally.
- There will be an increase in the proportion of providers rated outstanding or retaining good judgements from Ofsted.
- We will ensure specialist and alternative provision is in the right locations, high quality and accessible across Shropshire without long journey times.
- More early years settings, schools and Post 16 providers will have a consistent and effective emotional health and mental wellbeing offer, including a trained Senior Mental Health Lead in their senior leadership teams.
- There will be an improvement in attainment and progress outcomes across all phases, as high-quality teaching, curriculum and inclusion enable children and young people's needs to be met whichever mainstream early years, school or post 16 setting they attend in Shropshire.

## Priority 2

Enable early identification and the right help at the right time, including reducing waiting times for speech and language therapy and neurodiversity assessments.

### Ambition

We will work in partnership across education, health and care to provide the right help at the right time to prevent challenges escalating.

### Delivery

- We will work with early years settings and schools to support the earliest identification of SEND, including supporting them to utilise evidence-based strategies to confidently and effectively meet the presenting needs of children and young people with SEND in mainstream. We will enhance the community and early help offer to complement this work.
- We will work together, guided by our Integration Model, to coordinate our support offers and direct responses with all relevant partner agencies to support children, young people and families. We will work together to deliver the Early Help strategy consistently across Shropshire, so that we are focussed on a 'family approach' to support.
- We will provide access to a high-quality training and professional development offer for our workforce, including early years settings, schools and Post 16 providers.
- We will support a well-integrated local public health and primary care network, including strengthening good health promotion and disease prevention. We will work with early years settings, schools and Post 16 providers to promote a consistent and effective emotional health and mental wellbeing offer, ensuring there is a trained Senior Mental Health Lead in all schools.
- We will work together to ensure children and young people with SEND and those in AP are appropriately protected from safeguarding risks, whilst also building capacity to self-manage/reduce risk to themselves, particularly around exploitation. We will develop the capacity of short break offers with a particular focus on Personal Assistants (PAs) to enable access to a wider range of offers.
- We will ensure that our Local Offer website helps children, young people and their families find the local information and support they need, whether online or face to face.

### Impact

- Children and young people with SEND will experience equitable opportunities to lead healthy lives. There will be full access to health services and support to maintain good physical and mental health.
- Children and young people with SEND are provided with appropriate personalised support at all stages of need and at key transition points.
- More mainstream early years, school and post 16 settings will be confident that they can meet the presenting needs of children and young people with SEND. Children and young people whose needs do not require an education, health and care plan (EHCP) receive high quality SEND Support whichever early years setting, school or Post 16 provider they attend.
- More families, children and young people with SEND tell us they are able to find and engage with services through better online local offer 'self-support' advice or face to face where necessary.
- There will be fewer admissions into A&E for mental health support. There will be a reduction in referrals to specialist service pathways, e.g. respite/short breaks, therapies especially SALT, ASD/ADHD with their needs being met through early intervention.

## Priority 2

Enable early identification and the right help at the right time, including reducing waiting times for speech and language therapy and neurodiversity assessments.

## Shropshire's Integration Model

Strengths based (people and communities).

Initial focus on supporting people to help themselves

Supported by :-

- high quality, integrated, easily understood universal services for people to access when they need it
- high quality, integrated, easily understood specialist services available when they are needed.



## Priority 3

Enable children and young people to communicate confidently, contribute to decisions, and feel visible and valued members of their community.

### Ambition

We will enable all children and young people to communicate confidently to the very best of their ability, build trust in sharing their lived experiences, encourage innovative ideas from them and their families to shape and improve long term outcomes for children and young people with SEND across Shropshire.

### Delivery

- We will ensure that early identification of communication needs will be supported with timely access to evidence informed strategies, interventions and advice to reduce the longer-term impact of communication needs. This will include early years, schools and Post 16 providers. Supporting parents, carers, settings and schools to provide support at the earliest opportunity.
- We will use creative approaches to listen to the voices of children, young people and families so we know whether we are making a difference. Acting on this feedback to plan, develop, redesign and commission services. Utilising the 'you said we did' feature of the local offer.
- We will co-produce, implement and embed a participation strategy to ensure that the views of children and young people are routinely incorporated into the decision-making processes across the SEND Area Partnership.
- Communicate effectively with families via newsletters, social media and ensuring the local offer is up to date.
- We will support all early years settings, education and Post 16 provisions to adopt a total communication approach.

### Impact

- Children and young people with SEND will have the skills and opportunities needed to confidently communicate to the very best of their ability and influence decisions on the support they receive as an individual.
- The SEND workforce and providers, including mainstream early years and post 16 settings and schools, will have the skills to co-produce with children, young people and their families so that they influence commissioning and support decisions.
- The views and direct input from children, young people and families are involved in the decision-making processes across the SEND Area Partnership, including strategic, operational and individual co-production. There is even stronger engagement and communication with families, supported by representative groups including PACC and SENDIASS, who routinely participate in strategic activity on behalf of families.
- Evidence and lessons learned from complaints/disagreements will inform feedback and training to the workforce. This will enable a reduction in conflict and tribunal action with families as evidenced through dispute resolution and mediation.
- Feedback from children, young people and families will show improvement in satisfaction rates for our communication, engagement in influencing decision making and quality of our services.

## Priority 4

Develop a proactive, supportive, and clear alternative provision offer.

### Ambition

We will develop a continuum of support, including targeted support in mainstream schools, local AP and time limited intervention placements, to enable those young people to be successful in mainstream schools or secure a sustained post-16 destination.

### Delivery

- We will develop a well-integrated, complementary and effective SEND and AP system, including mainstream education, outreach services, SEND Hubs, specialist provision, early help, social care and local health services. This will form part of the Local Area Inclusion Plan to ensure AP providers are responsive to need Shropshire wide, through the AP Improvement Plan.
- We will work with schools to develop a complementary continuum of AP and/or intervention offers, including increasing the resilience of mainstream schools within the local area to effectively identify and meet SEND need at the earliest opportunity. This will include an expectation that 'targeted support in mainstream' is available and used before placement into AP.
- We will work with early years settings, schools and Post 16 providers to support the development of relational/restorative approaches, including behaviour policies, in addition to high quality teaching, to effectively meet the needs of all children and young people in mainstream provision.
- We will ensure transparent accountability for the outcomes, mobility and destinations of individual pupils, including equitable access to AP, oversight and quality assurance of this provision across Shropshire.

### Impact

- Targeted support in mainstream schools will be available across early years, primary and secondary phases, including access to this before AP placement is used. Children and young people accessing AP on time limited placements will successfully return to mainstream school and/or secure a sustained Post-16 destination.
- More children and young people are supported effectively in mainstream provision, achieve well and progress successfully into employment, further education or training.
- There will be a reduction in the rising number of children and young people accessing home education, particularly at secondary.
- Most children and young people with SEND will successfully and regularly attend mainstream school.
- There will be a reduction in persistent/severe absence and a reduction in suspensions and exclusions, particularly at secondary and for those supported through SEND Support.

## Priority 5

Develop a system that makes sense and works together, improving co-production, communication and engagement with families and professionals from all services. Including Improving the quality and timeliness of EHC plans, annual reviews, and transition pathways.

### Ambition

We want our children, young people and their families to have a positive experience when navigating our services provided by our area SEND and AP partnership.

### Delivery

- We will ensure that joint commissioning underpins our work. This includes a robust needs assessment and demonstrates an understanding of how the whole system is working collectively to meet families' needs as early as possible while also supporting the management of long-term conditions.
- We will strengthen our local practice and across services recognising the value of the voluntary and community sector and maximising the opportunity to address contextual safeguarding needs for children and young people with SEND. This means clarifying how to access services and ensuring high quality information and advice is available to all families regardless of whether their child has an emerging or identified need. It means a dedicated support pathway for children and young people that are vulnerable and struggling to access education, a support offer for needs relating to neurodevelopmental and speech and language issues that is needs-led and that support should be available pre, during or post diagnosis, if diagnosis is sought at all.
- We will clarify and better communicate the criteria for access to services and support from the local offer.
- We will develop, implement and embed rigorous quality assurance processes to ensure that service provision is consistent across Shropshire and meets the needs of children and young people. This includes the quality and timeliness of producing new EHC plans and completing annual reviews.
- We will focus on coherent communications and approach to all interactions with families and each other; further developing a culture of effective listening and talking between professionals and families.
- We will deliver the actions identified in the Accelerated Action Plan (APP) and the wider SEND Action plan approved by the SEND & AP Partnership Board.
- All staff across our SEND Area Partnership will know and understand their role in supporting children and young people with SEND, and the role of other professionals in the partnership.

### Impact

- Children, young people and their families will tell us that we have a clear and well networked system of consistent and easy to access support services across education, health and care.
- All Shropshire professionals will be able to and be encouraged to access online and face to face learning programmes focusing on inclusion.
- Children and young people and their families tell us that things are improving for them and that our plans to support them are of a good quality, meet their needs and are jointly produced with them. New EHC plans are produced on time, to a good quality and annual reviews are completed and updated/acted upon.
- We will receive positive feedback on the Local Offer.
- Where specialist services are required, they are accessed within the required timescale dependent on need.

## Priority 6

### Develop a data informed and intelligence rich approach

#### Ambition

We will ensure that data systems enable key information (outcomes, waiting times, compliance, etc to be available to all partner services to inform forecasting and commissioning decisions, understand gaps in services and improve quality and performance where necessary.

#### Delivery

- We will implement robust tracking and data systems to ensure that provision evolves with changing cohorts and that we are at the forefront of strategic planning.
- We will develop our SEND and AP Data Dashboard that will draw on robust multi-agency data to help leaders across the SEND Area Partnership make better decisions and put our seven outcomes at the heart of strategic planning and review. We will generate and share reports so that all stakeholders better understand local need.
- We will co-produce and publish a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), aligned to the SEND and AP Strategy and Shropshire Plan, and regularly report on progress against these, so that we know that we are making a difference.
- We will work towards integrating data from the NHS Dynamic Support Register and Care (Education) Treatment Reviews to make sure our health and care services support people with a learning disability (and autistic people), so they are only admitted to hospital if they really need to.
- Our multi agency approach will link information from education, social care and NHS management information systems to better protect our children and young people with SEND who are vulnerable.

#### Impact

- Our SEND Partnership service providers will tell us that they are secure in their use of evidence; which will inform the forecasting and commissioning of provision and/or services for our children and young people with SEND and those accessing AP.
- Our stakeholders help develop the data dashboard to ensure it is fit for purpose.
- We will have a data dashboard that we can use to report to our stakeholders and governance bodies on our performance and forecast future trends.
- There is clear evidence that data is being used for forecasting joint commissioning requirements; recognising changing needs of the population.
- Our data dashboard indicates that performance across partner services is improving (outcomes, waiting times, compliance, etc...) and is better than national benchmarks.

## Priority 7

Enable children and young people to feel visible and valued members of their community, ensuring they are supported to be as socially and economically independent as possible to achieve their next steps in life.

### Ambition

We want all children and young people with SEND and those in AP settings to feel welcomed, valued and well supported by their education setting, including preparing well for adulthood and being able to live independently, where possible, in their communities.

### Delivery

- We will ensure that the needs of children and young people with SEND are always considered in local initiatives such as transport, sports facilities, public buildings and swimming pools. Engaging children and young people with SEND so they are confident to socialise, be as independent as possible and enjoy their recreation time.
- We will build on the work of the Shropshire Virtual School to develop a strategy that encourages effective relational practice and belonging in all education settings so that the vision of 'strong schools, built on love' is realised for all children and young people, including those with SEND or accessing AP.
- We will strengthen our work with charities and voluntary organisations, such as PACC, Actio and the Shropshire Youth Association (SYA), to ensure there is a vibrant range of high quality specialist activities and facilities in the community, for example local social care short breaks activities, local inclusive swimming lessons, horse riding and other opportunities for children and young people with SEND in the community, wherever you live in Shropshire. Supporting young people with SEND to develop a network of friends so they are confident to socialise and enjoy their recreation time.
- We will ensure that facilities across Shropshire are working to be more accessible for a range of physical and sensory needs.
- We will encourage and empower our children and young people to increase their independence, listening to families and young people as we further develop our preparation for adulthood offer. This could include increasing the use of personal transport budgets, independent travel training or practical activities to prepare them for living independently.
- We will work with young people, local businesses, training providers, colleges and schools to create opportunities to experience the world of work with the long-term aim of securing employment and/or meaningful work-related activity. Increasing participation in Supported Internships that lead to paid employment and/or meaningful work.

### Impact

- Children and young people with SEND tell us that they have developed a network of friends and they are confident to socialise and enjoy their recreation time.
- Children and young people with SEND, including their families, tell us that their experiences in mainstream schools are positive; they feel welcomed, valued and well supported.
- Increasing participation in Supported Internships that lead to paid employment and/or meaningful work. More young people with SEND progress to further and higher education, employment, training or meaningful work
- More children and young people remain in Shropshire, including accessing more local provision that retains their connections with their community.
- Children and young people, where appropriate, participate in all aspects of early years settings, schools or Post 16, including spending most or all of their time learning in mainstream activities with their peers.
- Young people tell us their choices have been heard so that they can live in sustainable, safe and appropriate accommodation and, where possible, live independently.



**Integrated  
Care System**  
Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin



**Shropshire  
Council**

# Outcomes

# Outcomes Framework

There are two reasons to develop an agreed outcomes framework.

1. We need to measure our performance by focusing clearly on how our work is impacting on outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
2. We need to ensure that we have a framework of consistent, regular measurements that we can apply year on year to see how our impact on children and young people is changing over time.

Each of the top-level outcomes on the right is broken down to reflect what good looks like in each area, where applicable, for children and young people, parent carers and professionals.

For each of these, we aim to devise a measure to track progress towards these good outcomes.





## Children and Young People with SEND

Early years,  
school and FE  
Settings



SHROPSHIRE  
Parent  
And  
Carer  
Council



# LIVE WORKING DOCUMENT



## Shropshire SEND and AP Outcomes Framework 2025 - 2029

# Our shared commitment to young people with SEND

“We want all Shropshire children and young people with special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) to be healthy, happy and safe, and able to achieve their potential to lead a fulfilling life.

We want them to have, and to expect, the same opportunities in life as other children and young people.

We want them to thrive and live their best life.”

An **outcomes framework** outlines a range of things that children and young people themselves, families and professionals would like all children in Shropshire to **do**, to **have**, to **feel** and to **achieve**, for them to be living the **best life** they can.

Partnership Boards will be responsible for:

- Accountability of delivery and impact of this framework.
- Quality assurance processes.
- Feedback being heard and understood to inform and influence change and decision making where appropriate.

# Our shared commitment to co-production and collaboration

The outcomes framework aims to take a single, unified approach to improving outcomes for children and young people, including tracking impact across all the services that are part of the SEND and AP Area Partnership.

The local area's expectation is for our six outcomes to be embedded across all parts of the local SEND and AP system. Each individual child or young person with SEND will have a plan to support them in achieving the best possible outcomes. Organisations supporting them will have a strategic plan on how they will enable the outcomes for all children and young people with SEND.

The framework presented below illustrates how the local area partnership will deliver and measure the impact of these outcomes for all children and young people with SEND at a strategic level. The SEND and AP Strategy will have a detailed annual delivery plan which will outline how the local area partnership will deliver the required improvements

This will ensure that we are aware of the impact of these services on any members of our target audience and their families and care givers.

Future work to realise the ambition of the outcomes framework will involve setting, where possible direct, measurable targets.

We commit to establishing an annual programme of engagement that brings our co-production strategy to life and works collaboratively across the partnership with children, young people, families and partners to seek, collect and act upon their views. We will then produce regular 'You said, we did' updates so everyone can see the difference their feedback made to improving outcomes for children, young people, families and partners.



# **SEND and AP Outcomes Framework**

# Outcomes Framework

There are several reasons to develop an agreed outcomes framework.

1. We need to ensure that improving outcomes for children and young people underpins all the work we do across the SEND and AP Area Partnership.
2. We need to measure our performance by focusing clearly on how our work is impacting on outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
3. We need to ensure that we have a framework of consistent, regular measurements that we can apply year on year to see how our impact on children and young people is changing over time.
4. We need to ensure that there is connectivity between children and young people's needs and other plans that support them (e.g. Personal Education Plans)

The outcomes on the right are broken down to reflect what good looks like in each area, where applicable for children and young people, Parent Carers and families.

For each of these, we will work together to devise measures to track progress towards these good outcomes.



## Children and young people with SEND, and their families, feel empowered to express their views and have them considered in decisions affecting their education, health and well-being.

### Children and young people

- I have opportunities to share my wishes and feelings and what is important to me.
- I am listened to, understood, valued and respected by everyone that supports me.
- Reasonable adjustments support my preferred way of communicating and I have a range of ways to express my needs.
- I am given an opportunity to create, review and contribute to plans relating to my education, health and care.
- I am given all the information I need to make decisions. All options are explored and clearly presented to me in a way I understand.
- My views are used to make decisions, there is 'no decision about me, without me'.
- Support is provided to meet my needs at the earliest opportunity.

### Parent carers

- I have opportunities to share my wishes and feelings and what is important to my family.
- I have an opportunity to co-produce, review and contribute to plans relating to my child or young person's education, health and care.
- I am supported to empower my child or young person to make their decisions, working with them to explore and explain options and review support.
- My voice is valued and respected, and our family's needs and aspirations are considered.
- Support is offered to enable us to inform and influence the care and support our family receive.
- Where things aren't right, I am supported to access clear systems and provided with the right information at the right time to find a resolution.
- The system responds to my needs at the earliest opportunity.

## Children and young people with SEND (and their families) feel empowered to express their views and have them considered in decisions affecting their education, health and well-being

### Key actions for the local area include:

- We will ensure that early identification of communication needs are supported with timely access to evidence informed strategies, interventions and advice to reduce the longer-term impact of communication needs. This will include early years, schools and Post 16 providers. Supporting Parent Carers, settings and schools to provide support at the earliest opportunity. (Priority 3)
- We will clarify and better communicate the criteria for access to services and support from the local offer. (Priority 3)
- We will use creative approaches to listen to the voices of children, young people and families so we know if we are making a difference. Acting on this feedback to plan, develop, redesign and commission services. Utilising the 'you said we did' feature of the local offer. (Priority 3)
- We will co-produce, implement and embed a participation strategy and co-production framework to ensure that the views of children and young people and their families are routinely incorporated into the decision-making processes across the Shropshire SEND Area Partnership. (Priority 3)
- We will communicate effectively with families via newsletters, social media and ensure the local offer is up to date. (Priority 3)
- We will support all early years settings, education and Post 16 provisions to adopt a total communication approach. (Priority 3)

### How will the local area will measure impact and progress?

- Evidence from case studies indicates that children and young people with SEND (and their families) feel empowered to express their views and have them considered in decisions affecting their education, health and well-being
- Evidence of regular and increased participation in decision making by children, young people and their families.
- Evidence of how feedback from children and young people and their families influences the delivery of services.
- Evidence from plans indicated alignment across education, health and social care.
- More EHCP and Annual Reviews are delivered in a timely fashion.
- Reduction in complaints and appeals.
- Reduction in conflict and tribunal action with families as evidenced through dispute resolution and mediation.
- Increased QA of annual reviews indicating ambition for children and young people with SEND.
- Increased participation rates of training by professionals to support methods of communication.
- Increase in timely and accessible support for children and young people
- Increase in attainment and progress outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- Increase in School SEND Reviews/external quality mark validation
- Outcomes from children and young people's and parent carers' Annual Review survey.



**Children and young people with SEND feel they have a good quality of life and are supported to make progress to achieve their aspirations cross education, health and social development.**

### **Children and young people**

- I have a good quality of life.
- I am supported to achieve my aspirations and am provided with support and guidance to enable me to do this.
- I have a range of career, volunteering or education options, my learning opportunities are not limited.
- Decisions taken to support me are made in my best interest and are co-produced.
- All my progress is recognised and celebrated, in areas that are important to me.

### **Parent carers**

- I understand the options available to make informed decisions and choices about my child or young person and family's future. I know how to seek further support if necessary.
- I am supported to enable my child or young person to achieve their aspirations.
- Plans to support my child or young person are suitably ambitious and enable them to achieve their goals and aspirations.
- I have confidence in the systems in place to support my family

## Children and young people with SEND feel they have a good quality of life and are supported to make progress to achieve their aspirations cross education, health and social development.

### Key actions for the local area include:

- Ensure that data systems enable key information (outcomes, waiting times, compliance, etc to be available to all partner services to inform forecasting and commissioning decisions, understand gaps in services and improve quality and performance where necessary. (Priority 6)
- We will develop a well-integrated, complementary and effective SEND and AP system, including mainstream education, outreach services, SEND Hubs, specialist provision, early help, social care and local health services. (Priority 4)
- We will work with early years settings, schools and Post 16 providers to support the development of relational/restorative approaches, including behaviour policies, in addition to high quality teaching, to effectively meet the needs of all children and young people in mainstream provision. (Priority 4)
- We will ensure transparent accountability for the outcomes, mobility and destinations of individual children and young people, including equitable access to alternative provision, oversight and quality assurance of this provision across Shropshire. (Priority 4)

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### How will the local area will measure impact and progress?

- Reasonable adjustments are made to enable children and young people to achieve.
- Evidence from case studies supporting transition and celebrations of progress.
- Increase EHCP and Annual Review timeliness.
- Increase in positive QA of annual reviews indicating ambition for children and young people with SEND.
- Increased evidence of timely support and assessment across education, health and social care.
- Increased percentage of children and young people with SEND engaged in employment, education and training.
- Improvement in Ofsted inspection outcomes of schools and settings.
- Improvement in Area SEND inspection outcomes.
- Evidence of impact of intervention programmes to support children and young people (e.g. ELSEC).
- Increase in attendance data and a reduction in suspension and exclusion data for children and young people with SEND.
- Evidence of destinations for children and young people with SEND.
- Increase in attainment and progress outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- Increase in School SEND Reviews/external quality mark validation.
- Positive children and young people's and parent carers' Annual Review survey.



**Children and young people with SEND have access to appropriate services to enable them to be healthy, happy and to live well.**

### **Children and young people**

- I live healthily and am supported to access help, where needed.
- I can communicate my health needs to those who are responsible for supporting me. This will include both my mental health and wellbeing and my physical health.
- Where appropriate, I am provided with information about treatment or medication to meet my needs and I understand this.
- Me and my family are well informed to enable us to make good choices about my diet, sleep and exercise.
- I don't have to wait for long periods of time to receive the support I need.

### **Parent carers**

- I am provided with clear information to enable me to understand my child or young person's health condition and/or disability and make informed decisions.
- I am provided with timely information from the health care workers who are supporting my child or young person and my family.
- I understand the treatment or medication my child or young person has been prescribed, and why. My wishes and feelings have informed this.
- I am supported to ensure my child or young person attends health appointments that meets their needs.
- I am informed and supported to help my child or young person make good choices about diet, sleep and exercise.
- Our needs as a family are identified and met.



## Children and young people with SEND have access to appropriate services to enable them to be healthy, happy and to live well.

### Key actions for the local area include:

- Enable early identification and the right help at the right time, including reducing waiting times for speech and language therapy and neurodiversity assessments and access to Early Help assessment (Priority 2)
  - We will provide access to a high-quality training and professional development offer for our workforce, including early years settings, schools and Post 16 providers and health and social care colleagues (Priority 2)
- Ensure that the needs of children and young people with SEND are always considered in local initiatives such as transport, sports facilities, public buildings and swimming pools. Engaging children and young people with SEND so they are confident to socialise, be as independent as possible and enjoy their recreation time. (Priority 7)
- We will ensure that facilities across Shropshire are working to be more accessible for a range of physical and sensory needs. (Priority 7)
  - We will build on the work of the Shropshire Virtual School to develop a strategy that, complements work Children's Social Care, encourages effective relational practice and belonging in all education settings so that the vision of 'strong schools, built on love' is realised for all children and young people, including those with SEND or accessing AP. (Priority 7)
  - We will work towards integrating data from the NHS Dynamic Support Register and Care (Education) Treatment Reviews to make sure our health and care services support people with a learning disability (and autistic people), so they are only admitted to hospital if they really need to. (Priority 6)
  - Our multi agency approach will link information from education, social care and NHS management information systems to better protect our children and young people with SEND who are vulnerable. (Priority 6)

### How will the local area will measure impact and progress?

- Reasonable adjustments are made to enable children and young people to be healthy and happy.
- Evidence from case studies indicates that children and young people with SEND (and their families) have access to appropriate services to enable them to be healthy, happy to and to live well.
- Reduction in percentage of children and young people with SEND on waiting lists.
- Increase in percentage of children and young people with SEND accessing services whilst waiting.
- Introduction of comparative health data from JSNA.
- Increased in engagement by parent carers in Early Help programmes.
- Increase in School SEND Reviews/external quality mark validation.
- Positive children and young people's and parent carers' Annual Review survey.



I am  
supported

**Children and young people with SEND and their families receive timely and appropriate support for education, health and care services.**

### **Children and young people**

- I have trusted people around me to meet my needs and advocate for my best interests.
- I am connected to a community that my family feels a part of.
- My strengths are recognised and celebrated.
- I am provided with the information I need to be able to make decisions and plan for my future.
- All my needs are understood, considered and met.
- My education, health and social needs are identified, understood and met.
- I don't have to wait for long periods of time to receive the support I need.

### **Parent carers**

- There is a network of support to meet my family's needs.
- My family is provided with information about the choices they have available.
- I am able to access the right support and the right time through clear processes.
- My family is able to access support to provide a break from caring responsibilities.
- I have support to enable me to have a fulfilled life, which may include employment and other opportunities..



I am  
supported

**Children and young people with SEND and their families receive timely and appropriate support for education, health and care services.**

### **Key actions for the local area include**

- Develop local, high quality, inclusive provision across the system. Including strengthening the graduated response and inclusive mainstream provision whilst ensuring consistency and effectiveness of the emotional health and mental wellbeing offer in mainstream education settings, across all phases. (Priority 1)
- Develop our social prescribing and other community support offers for families to support early identification, inclusion and participation and building on the development of the Early Help Hubs across Shropshire. We will build a thriving market for short break provision and encourage the use of personal budgets to support respite opportunities. (Priority 1)
- Develop a system that makes sense and works together, improving co-production, communication and engagement with families and professionals from all services. Including Improving the quality and timeliness of EHC plans, annual reviews, and transition pathways. (Priority 5)

### **How will the local area measure impact and progress?**

- Evidence from case studies indicates that children and young people with SEND (and their families) receive timely and appropriate support for education, health and care services.
- Reduction in waiting list timescales with respect to education, health and social care.
- Increase in proportion of EHCPs and annual reviews rated good or better in quality assurance.
- Improvement in data with respect to transition opportunities (NEETs)
- More young people with SEND engaged in employment, education and training.
- More children and young people with SEND accessing short-break activities.
- Positive Ofsted inspection outcomes of schools and settings.
- Positive Area SEND and ILACS inspection outcomes.
- Increase in attendance, reduction of suspension and exclusion data for children and young people with SEND.
- Evidence destinations for children and young people with SEND that are ambitious and achievable.
- Improvement in attainment and progress data for children and young people with SEND.
- Increase in of School SEND Reviews/external quality mark validation
- Positive children and young people's and parent carers' Annual Review survey.



**Children and young people with SEND and their families are kept safe.**

**Children and young people**

- I am able to communicate when I feel worried, unsafe or unwell.
- I belong and am safe in my community, at my setting, activities or employment.
- I can get to and from my school/ college/ activities/ employment safely.
- Reasonable adjustments are made to enable me to be safe.
- Systems are in place to ensure that I am kept safe and protected from additional risks.

**Parent carers**

- My child or young person is never excluded, isolated or discriminated against because of their special education needs or disability.
- I know who I can speak to if I feel they or our family need help
- The right services are available at the right time to keep us safe.
- I have access to information to understand my rights, and how to access advice and support if I feel my child or young person is being excluded, isolated or discriminated against.
- I know that every school has a behaviour policy and every child and member of staff has a right to feel safe.



## Children and young people with SEND and their families are kept safe.

### Key actions for the local area include:

- We will work together to ensure children and young people with SEND and those in AP are appropriately protected from safeguarding risks, whilst also building capacity to self-manage/reduce risk to themselves, particularly around exploitation.
- We will develop the capacity of short break offers with a particular focus on Personal Assistants (PAs) to enable access to a wider range of offers. (Priority 2)
- We will ensure that our Local Offer website helps children, young people and their families find the local information and support they need, whether online or face to face. (Priority 2)
- We will work with early years settings, schools and Post 16 providers and colleagues in health and social care to promote a consistent and effective emotional health and mental wellbeing offer, ensuring there is a trained Senior Mental Health Lead in all schools. (Priority 2)
- Develop a proactive, supportive, and clear alternative provision offer. (Priority 4)
- We will strengthen our local practice and across services recognising the value of the voluntary and community sector and maximising the opportunity to address contextual safeguarding needs for children and young people with SEND. (Priority 5)

### How will the local area measure impact and progress?

- Evidence from case studies indicates that children and young people with SEND (and their families) are kept safe and feel safe.
- Increase the percentage of timely assessments across education, health, and social care.
- Increase in attendance, reduction of suspension and exclusion data for children and young people with SEND.
- Fewer children and young people with SEND feature within safeguarding referrals
- Increase in EHCP record references to future safety needs.
- Reduction in use of part-time timetables
- Reduction in proportion of children and young people who are electively home educated.
- Increase in positive Ofsted inspection outcomes of schools and settings
- Improvement with respect to ILACS inspection outcomes.
- Increase in Section 11 school safeguarding audits recognising increased vulnerability of pupils with SEND.
- Increase in of School SEND Reviews/external quality mark validation
- Evidence of connectivity between SEND Annual Reviews and other plans that seek to support the child or young person.
- Positive children and young people's and parent carers' Annual Review survey.



## **Children and young people with SEND are well-prepared for the future.**

### **Children and young people**

- I can communicate decisions about my future, and this informs the care and support I receive.
- I am informed and supported to understand choices I can make about my future.
- My wishes for the future are aspirational and appropriate and choices I make reflect this.
- I am provided with ongoing support to learn, practice and maintain the skills I need to live as independently as possible.
- I am supported to travel independently.

### **Parent carers**

- I feel confidence that my child's future is considered in plans
- I have confidence in the range of options for my child's future.
- I am included in decision making about the support my child or young person needs to prepare for their future and understand the options available.
- I am part of a community that enables my family to build relationships, friendships and to access support in our local community.



**Children and young people with SEND are well-prepared for the future.**

**Key actions for the local area include:**

- We will ensure that our Local Offer website helps children, young people and their families find the local information and support they need, whether online or face to face. (Priority 2)
- Enable children and young people to feel visible and valued members of their community, ensuring they are supported to be as socially and economically independent as possible to achieve their next steps in life (Priority 7)
- We will encourage and empower our children and young people to increase their independence, listening to families and young people as we further develop our preparation for adulthood offer. This could include increasing the use of personal transport budgets, independent travel training or practical activities to prepare them for living independently. (Priority 7)
- We will work with young people, local businesses, training providers, colleges and schools to create opportunities to experience the world of work with the long-term aim of securing employment and/or meaningful work-related activity. Increasing participation in Supported Internships that lead to paid employment and/or meaningful work. (Priority 7)

**How will the local area measure impact and progress?**

- Evidence from case studies indicates that children and young people with SEND are well-prepared for the future.
- Increase the percentage of timely assessment and support across education, health, and social care.
- Increase annual reviews indicating ambition for children and young people with SEND
- Improvement in robust and timely transition between services.
- Increase in young people accessing independent or supported living at 25.
- Increase in positive Ofsted inspection outcomes of schools and settings
- Improvement with respect to area SEND Inspection outcomes.
- Increased in young people with SEND engaged in employment, education and training
- Increase in attendance and reduction in suspension and exclusion for children and young people with SEND.
- Increase in of School SEND Reviews/external quality mark validation
- Positive children and young people’s and parent carers’ Annual Review survey.

# Parent Carer and Children and Young People's Annual Review Survey

At the point of Annual Review, children, young people and their families will be asked to complete a survey with questions similar to those suggested below.

Additional guidance notes will be provided to support the implementation of these and other questions developed by SEND partnership workstreams. The outcomes from the survey will be aggregated regularly and used to inform the future development of services and check the quality of practice by listening to the voices of those with lived experiences of SEND.

Termly, the data from this survey will be aggregated and outcomes reported to the SEND and AP partnership board.

To support this, children and young people will respond on a 1-5 numbered scale or use faces



1

2



3

4



5

Adults will also be asked to provide a score from 1-5 for each question.

# Parent Carer and Children and Young People's Annual Review Survey



My voice  
is heard

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I am  
achieving

| Child / YP question for AR                                                 | Parent Carer's question for AR                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I am helped to communicate my views and wishes                             | I feel able to share my views and wishes about my child's education, care and health.                      |
| Adults listen to me. They consider my views when making decisions about me | My views and wishes are considered carefully by practitioners when decisions are being made about my child |
| I am being included in making decisions about my Plan (EHCP)               | I feel I have been involved in co-producing my child's EHCP                                                |

| Child / YP question for AR                            | Parent Carer's question for AR                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I feel I am learning and making progress.             | I feel my child is making progress towards reaching their potential                         |
| I have a chance to take part in clubs and activities. | My child has the opportunity to take part in clubs and activities they wish to engage with. |
| I have examples of my achievements.                   | My child's achievements are celebrated                                                      |

# Parent Carer and Children and Young People's Annual Review Survey

I am  
healthy  
and happy

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| Child / YP question for AR                                                | Parent Carer's question for AR                                                         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I can tell people how well and happy I feel - or about any worries I have | I am confident my child can tell someone how well and happy they are                   |
| I get help to be healthy and happy when I need it                         | I feel my child is well supported to be as healthy and happy as possible               |
| I know where to find information about my health and well-being           | I know where to find information to help my child with health, wellbeing and education |
|                                                                           | My child is getting the right help at the right time for their health and well-being   |

I am  
supported

| Child / YP question for AR                      | Parent Carer's question for AR                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I can name an adult I trust                     | I feel I have a network of support I can go to (if I wish)                                           |
| I have the help I need to take part and succeed | My child has access to the help they need so they can take part and succeed                          |
|                                                 | I feel processes and timescales are clear to me (around the support my child and our family receive) |

# Parent Carer and Children and Young People's Annual Review Survey



**I feel  
safe**

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| Child / YP question for AR                                         | Parent Carer's question for AR                                                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I feel safe in the place where I receive my education or training. | I feel my child is safe in the place where they receive their education or training. |
| I can name adults I trust to go to for help                        | My child can identify trusted adults                                                 |
| I feel safe online                                                 | My child is safe online.                                                             |
| I feel safe in my local area when I go out and about               | My child is safe in their local community                                            |



**I have  
independence**

| Child / YP question for AR                                                                                 | Parent Carer's question for AR                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I have help to learn life skills and to practice them.                                                     | My child is learning and practicing life skills to help prepare them for their future          |
| I have help to plan what I would like to achieve when I am older.                                          | My child is being supported to be aspirational about their future                              |
| I am provided with choices about my future and supported to understand them.                               | My child is provided with choices about their future and we understand what these options are. |
| I am helped to manage changes that affects me. I am provided with the right information at the right time. | Transitions for my child are planned for in a timely fashion and well supported                |

# Parent Carer and Children and Young People's Annual Review Survey



## Free text questions for children and young people

I have enjoyed...

I don't like...

These things are important to me...

I feel confident about...

I feel worried about...

In the future, I would like...

## Free text questions for Parent Carers

My child does best when...

My child struggles when...

As a family, we find this difficult...

This is working well for us as a family...

This is important to us as a family...

In the future, we would like...



**Committee and Date**

**Council**

**25 September 2025**

Item

Public



## Children's Services Ofsted Report and Next Steps

|                                           |                              |                                                                                                          |              |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Responsible Officer:</b>               |                              | David Shaw, Director Children's Services (Tanya Miles: serving DCS during the inspection June/July 2025) |              |
| email:                                    | David.shaw@shropshire.gov.uk | Tel:                                                                                                     | 01743 256479 |
| <b>Cabinet Member</b> (Portfolio Holder): |                              | Ruth Houghton                                                                                            |              |

### 1. Synopsis

- 1.1 This report summarises the recent three-week Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS), of Shropshire Children's Services and outcomes achieved.
- 1.2 It also outlines the work undertaken to drive the service to achieve Outstanding as its recent final judgment, including actions taken by the service after the November 2023 Ofsted focussed visit that identified areas for improvement in specific child protection practices.
- 1.3 These actions outlined below, renewed governance, performance and management approaches that underpin the services delivery model are intended to enable the service to retain the Outstanding judgement going forward. The continuous improvement model in place are responding to challenges effectively and secure developments robustly.

- 1.4 A Children's Improvement Board was established with cross party representatives and officers working together, alongside SLIP, (service led improvement partner) activities and Department for Education advice and support accessed.

## 2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. This report provides the background and updated position relating to the recent Ofsted ILACS inspection visit 16<sup>th</sup> June 2025 to 4<sup>th</sup> July 2025, where Shropshire Children's Services achieved the Outstanding overall rating.
- 2.2. This is an overall improvement since the ILACS judgement of Good overall achieved in February 2022.
- 2.3. The judgements made are as follows and can found in the published Ofsted report.

| Judgement                                                                | Grade       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families | Outstanding |
| The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection    | Outstanding |
| The experiences and progress of children in care                         | Outstanding |
| The experiences and progress of care leavers                             | Good        |
| Overall effectiveness                                                    | Outstanding |

- 2.4. Inspectors' comments highlighted below are in the published report and describe their key findings and professional reasons for their judgement.
- 2.5. Children in Shropshire achieve positive outcomes and demonstrate measurable progress due to effective services that comprehensively address their needs and mitigate risks.
- 2.6. Since the last ILACS inspection in February 2022, and particularly since the subsequent focused visit in November 2023, which identified a decline in child protection practice, senior leaders have taken purposeful action to implement a wide range of evidence-based improvements across the service. These improvements are having a discernible and positive impact, enabling vulnerable children, care leavers and families to make and sustain significant change, ultimately improving their lives

- 2.7. Senior leaders are ambitious, family focused and firmly child centred. Taking a whole-council approach, they have worked closely with political leaders and multi-agency partners, demonstrating unwavering commitment to improving outcomes for children and care leavers.
- 2.8. Leaders have cultivated a culture of ambition and continuous improvement. All areas of service are characterised by many areas of excellence, compassion, and a resolute focus on outcomes. Listening to children, understanding their lived experiences and acting on their views are strongly embedded in practice.
- 2.9. The report was presented to Cabinet on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2025 and was well received by all members of Cabinet and cross party acknowledgement of the hard work that went into the achievement of the Outstanding judgement.

### 3. Recommendations

That Council:

- 3.1. Acknowledges this outstanding achievement and the positive impact on the lives of children, young people and families in Shropshire.
- 3.2. Acknowledge the Council-wide commitment to sustaining and embedding this outstanding achievement, at the same time recognising the preventative benefits that doing so will bring to children, young people and families.

## Report

### 4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1. Children's Services maintenance of these high standards must be continued to avoid the risks of having an inadequate or requires improvement judgement in the future.
- 4.2. These judgements often lead to significant additional spending requirements and improvement work requiring additional funding of £10-15m upwards, with higher costs often aligned to external intervention imposed on Local Authorities as a result. This could include Department of Education advisors and external reviewers being recommended. This can reduce the autonomy of the service, including requiring structural changes, and therefore impact the whole council.
- 4.3. Children's Services are securing a clear plan to address next steps recommendations made for development by Ofsted, alongside working together across the council and system partners through the Ambitions Board to continue to build on the achievements to date.
- 4.4. It is essential to retain the outstanding practice seen across many areas of Children's Services that is enabling the children, young people and their families of Shropshire to thrive.

## 4.5 Risk table

| <i>Risk</i>                                                                                                                                 | <i>Mitigation</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Potential deterioration of capacity if demands increase on the system.                                                                      | <p>Children's Services current operating model of increasing early help capacity, secure threshold application, appropriate referrals from partners and timeliness of intervention, securing children and young people's long-term homes quickly including adoption was evidenced through the inspection. Performance and demand tracking that is embedded across the system evidence that we are seeing reduced numbers of open cases (per child) monthly, there are 699 children looked after as @ 04/09/25, including 32 unaccompanied asylum seekers through the government scheme in place. This is a reduction overall from 2023/24 and to date numbers of children requiring care for their safety is less than those leaving care month on month. The service is monitoring and tracking these areas of demand weekly/monthly with clear management oversight and service manager check and challenge sessions in place.</p> <p>Benchmarking data will be available in October 25 re numbers of Children looked after per 10.000 and Local Authority spends; the service will be evaluating its position against that when available to. Our drive is to reduce the numbers of children in our care, secure the right placements/homes for them quickly and exit children from the system as quickly and safely as we can with family and friends, if possible, for them. If not long-term fostering or adoption are applied.</p> <p>The implementation of the Families First Programme nationally driven should also enhance further the principle and practice of right service, right time, building on prevention and early intervention to prevent families escalating into children's social care going forward.</p> |
| Placement capacity and homes for children and young people not meeting need.                                                                | Building our internal capacity will be crucial to avoid the impact of placement breakdowns on costs and impact on children and young people's well-being. The fostering transformation programme and work related to building on our children's homes is in place. Adoption is supported alongside the regional adoption agency and we have evidenced good practice in this area including sibling groups being placed together in the forever homes and family.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Outcomes for children and young people deteriorate. Practice standards and statutory timeliness (the activity of the service), deteriorate. | A <b>continuous improvement approach</b> of high expectation, high challenge and high support is embedded as business as usual across all areas of Children's Services. Performance weekly check and challenge sessions, audit monthly process, learning events and quality assurance activity underpinned by                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <p>management oversight supervision and leadership overview of decision making and spend.</p> <p>DCS quarterly updates evidence what we know, what we are developing and improving, what our next steps are for addressing this.</p> <p>This framework allows the service to have transparent conversations about challenges that are identified quickly and responded to quickly with robust remedial actions. Monitoring of the challenge is put in place until resolution is secured.</p> |
| Imposed spend on the council by DFE because of Ofsted determining standards and outcomes have deteriorated through their annual engagement meeting reviews with the DCS and intelligence gathering including performance tools nationally used re the CHAT Tool. | <p>Potential for imposed spending against the budget for improvements required to safeguard children. Often more than £10-£15m depending on the issues noted.</p> <p>Can include increased staffing, resources and services, specialist support and intervention, and DFE advisors oversight</p>                                                                                                                                                                                             |

## 5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. Shropshire Council continues to manage unprecedented financial demands as budgeted for within the Medium-Term Financial Strategy approved by Council on 27 February 2025 and subsequent updates. It is also addressed in our monitoring position presented to Cabinet monthly. Significant management action has and continues to be undertaken to ensure the Council's financial survival. While all reports provide the financial implications of decisions being taken, this may change as officers review the overall financial situation and make decisions aligned to financial survivability. Where non-essential spend is identified within the Council, this will be reduced. This may involve
  - scaling down initiatives,
  - changing the scope,
  - delaying implementation, or
  - extending delivery timescales.
- 5.2. The Ofsted Inspection does not consider the financial implications of the delivery of services, instead focussing on the quality of delivery and experiences.
- 5.3. Given sufficient time, the outstanding practice evident in Children's Services will reduce the numbers of children and young people in the care of the Local Authority. Evidence from other areas who have sustained and embedded outstanding practice demonstrates that this leads to reduced costs in this area and the ability to re-direct funding into even greater preventative services. This further strengthens the numbers of children and young people coming into care and enables greater family orientated support to be provided safely. This is the basis for the national Children's Social Care reforms, Families First Partnership (FFP).

## 6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1. The rural nature of Shropshire and the statutory requirement to ensure children and young people are safe, is for the majority of children's practitioners visits to be face to face. In the hub and/or at other locations like community venues or even school depending on the families and the situations circumstances. This does place a demand of workers across the service to travel to family homes. This places a demand on energy fuel and consumption.
- 6.2. Where the service can use the Teams function is used for meetings to reduce the impact of our workforces use of their cars, However some of the service's statutory functions require face to face time to be secured: including child protection multi agency case conferences, legal meetings, direct work sessions with children, young people and their families, court directed events and family time being some examples. Where the service can, and it is appropriate, we do use the Teams function comprehensively across the services. Of course, this is also reliant on the families access to a laptop and internet in their own homes too.

## 7. Background

- 7.1. Following the Good overall judgement ILACS in 2022 Shropshire Children's Services agreed a vision to underpin the next steps of the services development. Delivering this vision has been the focus of the service since the ILACS 2022 by implementing the beliefs and behaviours that underpinned the vision set out below.
- 7.2. **By treating our children and young people with respect, love and trust and with the right amount of encouragement we can inspire them to dream big, build relationships and connections that matter, and together with kindness and a sense of belonging we can do great things.**
- 7.3. Children and young people should live in their family homes and their communities when safe to do so and their needs can be met. They will be supported to access services in their communities that enable their families to thrive and children to secure good outcomes without escalating into statutory child protection or Looked After services.
- 7.4. We should work together with families at the earliest opportunity to enable and empower Shropshire's families and young people to achieve their best lives.
- 7.5. Our Early Help services enable families to access preventative support, reducing and preventing the risk to children and young people of experiencing significant harm. Through this approach the numbers of referrals now coming through to the social care service have reduced and we continue to build strong partnership relationships, securing positive interventions, assessments and parenting support across Shropshire.
- 7.6. We deliver this through a culture of evidence based restorative practice and strengths-based relationships that we know can change lives. Our leadership and practice are underpinned by these behaviours and values.
- 7.7. Children and young people subject to child protection plans will experience a social work intervention and partnership approach that enables them to be safer and remain in their family homes and communities. We will make timely decisions

- about when their needs cannot be met in their home environment and securing their permanence plans as quickly as we can.
- 7.8. We are aspirational for the Children we look after in our care when they cannot live in their birth family. Strong corporate parenting support across the council enables us to parent and support our children as our own, encouraging them and advocating for them, to be the best version of themselves and to live their best life.
- 7.9. Children and young people should have the benefit of being able to grow up in a family, either their own or foster care. When they do have to live in a children's home for a period, we are aspirational in always working towards them moving back into a family environment when they are ready to do so.
- 7.10. Children should make excellent progress in our care. Plans are creative and in line with the wishes and feelings of the child. Long term support is provided to families where children have returned home or to connected carers through Stepping Stones.
- 7.11. Our care leavers deserve high quality support and ongoing relationships as we stay connected, and we ensure they are accessing education and employment opportunities at the right time for them.
- 7.12. A focussed visit was undertaken by Ofsted (as part of their usual routine) in November 2023, Inspectors looked at the local authority's arrangements for children subject to a child protection plan, with a particular focus on the quality and impact of pre-proceedings interventions. This visit was carried out in line with the inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS) framework. This identified some key areas of practice within specific areas of the service that required improvement work to be secured.
- 7.13. During the Focused visit in November 2023 the Executive Director of People and the Chief Executive agreed the implementation of an Improvement Board to address the challenges experienced in Children's Services that inspectors had seen. This included caseloads being too high at that time, high turnover of staff in specific teams, and the need to reduce drift and delay with child protection plans and securing permanence for some children.
- 7.14. An Improving Outcomes for Children plan was agreed underpinned by the practice principle that "All children have the right intervention, at the right time, and live with a family, theirs or another one, where it is safe and right for them to do so"
- 7.15. December 2023 The establishment of the Children's Improvement Board was approved by full Council with the priority of the drawing up of a Children's Improvement Plan. Key areas of improvement were identified service wide with a focus on Children in need, child protection and public law outline matters.
- 7.16. The Initial Meeting was held on the 5th of Dec 2023. Executive Directors, Local Government Improvement Advisor, Cross party members and other relevant council department Assistant Directors were members. The Chief Executive Chaired the meeting.

- 7.17. The Children's Improvement Plan was developed. The Cabinet and the full council supported this.
- 7.18. The Board met monthly and received reports on progress and challenge updates against the action plan, including Quality Assurance Reports.
- 7.19. The Action plan had seven areas of development and was applied across the service where relevant.
- 7.20. The Board had a performance dashboard that measured the progress of key areas of improvement, e.g., caseloads, social workers/ agency social workers, changes in social workers, as well as the performance measures as per the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) dashboard.
- 7.21. Staffing capacity was addressed and 19 additional permanent posts agreed, 4 social workers, 4 Specialist Child Protection Social Workers (pilot), 3 additional Team Managers, 5 additional Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO), and a Permanence Coordinator. Legal Executive to progress Special Guardianship Orders conversions and Placement with Parents discharges.
- 7.22. Sector Led improvement partnerships (SLIP) were agreed and commissioned to support the service developments of Quality Assurance (QA) and Audit, Front Door, and Early Help.
- 7.23. DfE Improvement Advisor, Gladys Rhodes White, was invited by Shropshire Council to offer high challenge, support and expectations into the system and offer critical friend conversations of improvements being undertaken.
- 7.24. The Shropshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership worked together to start driving the "Turning the Curve Agenda", spotlight sessions were held, and the Partnerships operating model has been evaluated and re-established in line with Working Together 2023 requirements. The national agenda for reform of children's services is understood and planning for the transformation and implementation is underway. A recently appointed Families First Partnership (FFP) Strategic Lead will be driving the implementation of the national Families First Agenda, under the direction of the Director of Children's Services.
- 7.25. Progress has been made as a result and good/outstanding outcomes for children and young people have become increasingly consistent and impactful on their lives. This is evidenced through the continuous improvement work embedded in the system, including weekly performance check and challenge meetings, auditing, feedback from children, young people and their families, senior leadership review and management oversight.
- 7.26. SLIP work has been undertaken with Wiltshire Local Authority (LA) reviewing and learning re QA, audit and closing the loop – this is ongoing.
- 7.27. We are completing more child journey audits, increasingly being judged as good and outstanding. Theme led dip sampling is embedded in the system and proactive challenge is in place through the management structure, and support is applied to resolve challenges timely and effectively. Our audit practice and performance oversight through the leadership team is evidencing positive impacts for young people and their families.

- 7.28. We are learning from these outcomes, providing immediate remedial actions including training if required, engaging the team managers and seeing closing the activity in children and young people's records.
- 7.29. The Independent reviewing officer (IRO) footprint is seen in children's records and offers appropriate support and challenge when required. IROs are gathering children's wishes, feelings and views and the Independent Chair scrutiny work has increased.
- 7.30. Caseloads have reduced across the service and are now mostly manageable, and social workers told the inspectors when asked. Caseload management is a specific issue in different teams and management oversight and supervision facilitates the workers throughput as needed. .
- 7.31. Early help referrals have significantly increased, and weekly transfer meetings are securing timely transfer to the right team at the right time. Monitoring is consistently embedded.
- 7.32. The number of changes of social worker has significantly reduced over the last 9 months.
- 7.33. Early help provision and pathways are continuing to support children and families, and they are benefitting from this quickly at the point of referral. This is reducing the likelihood of families requiring social work intervention.
- 7.34. We are completing assessments more quickly and have clear performance oversight embedded avoiding drift and delay.
- 7.35. If children need to come into care for their safety this is done in a timely and effective manner
- 7.36. We are starting more and completing Public Law outline (PLO processes) more effectively. This is the work undertaken alongside families prior to court proceedings being instigated to avoid the proceeding if possible. Pre proceedings work, including commissioning of specialist assessments and support services is embedded and care proceedings are being completed more quickly. Care Proceedings are timelier.
- 7.37. We are securing permanence outcomes for children including Special Guardianship Order ( SGO ) and Adoption plans securing their futures and forever families.
- 7.38. Service managers are chairing legal planning meetings and decision making is collaborative with legal colleagues and operational managers.
- 7.39. The service has completed the work with the SLIP Wiltshire LA to improve the experience for families of the pre proceedings and legal pathways. This has influenced the development of the procedures and practice guidance that has been updated.
- 7.40. The July 2024 focused visit by Ofsted looked at the local authority's arrangements for children in care, including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. There

were positive reflections made, and good practice seen in these areas, with practice improvement recommendations made to further enhance the services provided.

- 7.41. Additional service developments continued to be implemented, including a project team to review and oversee all children and young people that were subject to Placement with Parents (PwP) and living at home with their parents on care orders. Alongside practice learning, they identified those children that they could take back to court to have care orders revoked, enabling the children and their families to no longer require statutory intervention. This also applied to children and young people where special guardianship orders were identified as their permanence plan.
- 7.42. The project team developed and delivered good practice workshops across the service to support the timeliness of practice and improvements became embedded in the system.
- 7.43. The case management teams progressed permanence outcomes within their caseloads to. Adoptions, Special Guardianship Orders and Placement with parents' arrangements, revocation of care orders have continued to progress and become timelier.
- 7.44. Permanence tracking, check and challenge is embedded in the system and fortnightly reviews and weekly performance meetings are supporting with high expectations, challenge and support for this work to be progressing. Additional fostering panels and agency decision maker (ADM) time is also agreed to enable children's outcomes to be secured.
- 7.45. The corporate parenting strategy (2024-27) was influenced by the voice of care experienced children and young people. This included the council pledge and the Care Leavers Local Offer, both of which were co-produced with care experienced children, young people.
- 7.46. The corporate parenting strategy was presented to full Council on 12th December by the Lead Member and care experienced young person (Co-chair of Corporate Parenting Steering Board). There was an emphasis on bringing love back into the system, shaping and delivering services with care and compassion.
- 7.47. Participation and listening to the voice of children and young people is subject to continuous improvement and this was seen as a strength during the recent inspection
- 7.48. Establishing the new DCS role according to statutory guidance will allow exclusive attention to children's services. This will help sustain current standards and support ongoing improvements aligned with the Families First Partnership (FFP) national agenda for change.

### **ILACS Inspection Preparation and Outcomes**

- 7.49. Preparation for the ILACS inspection picked up further pace in October 2024 with the appointment of an Ofsted improvement lead, working with the senior leadership team to focused on the specific requirements and information needed to successfully engage in the three-week inspection programme.

- 7.50. Weekly Ofsted and performance meetings were held addressing the requests for information sought by Ofsted.
- 7.51. Annexe A requirements are the eleven child-level data lists that cover the period of 6 months before the date of notification. This requires continuous review, updates and collaboration across performance, reporting, LCS and operational teams.
- 7.52. A self-evaluation framework is required to include cross service information, gathering evidence that demonstrates what we know about social work practice, what we are doing to address the challenges, and having identified the challenges ourselves, what remedial actions do we have in place to address them.
- 7.53. The last 6 months of service audits are also required with moderation and closing the loop activity evidenced. In addition to specific documents needing to be gathered and sent to the inspectors for their review. They chose up to 12 of these children for deep dive review and would be talking with social workers directly about their work.
- 7.54. Week one the inspectors are off site, but require the information as outlined above, we start organising their diaries and embedding the logistics plan for week two and three when they will be on site.
- 7.55. A council project team was put in place and was responsible for ensuring the logistics, evidence gathering, and communication with inspectors, the service, partners, SLT and members was planned for and put in place.
- 7.56. The service also held biweekly Assistant Director update sessions with all of children's services to give updates, share performance challenges, or audit learning and secure remedial actions collaboratively with practitioners and their managers directly.
- 7.57. Performance and practice challenges increased further into the new year 2025, with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), closing the loop activity – ensuring actions from audits are completed.
- 7.58. Team Managers were engaged and responding proactively, receiving tools to support their focus areas. Monthly End to End meetings and Performance Management Group engage the Team managers directly every other week as a check in, discussion with them about a practice issues, auditing together and challenges in the system to seek solutions are ongoing.
- 7.59. SLT weekly performance and business meetings have oversight and provide challenge, continuing to drive the readiness for Ofsted across the teams. Through a culture of children first, high support and high challenge, alongside high expectations for the service children and young people receive.
- 7.60. The team are also focussed on collating good practice examples and enabling the frontline workers to be able to demonstrate the very best of their practice when inspectors call in their children's records.
- 7.61. After a three-week period of working with Ofsted inspectors, Shropshire Council Ofsted ILACS Inspection ended on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2025.

- 7.62. The inspection held over a three-week period, included detailed case work analysis, data review, and interviews with partners, children, and families, and assessed the service across four key areas including:
- 7.63. The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families – outstanding
- 7.64. The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection – outstanding
- 7.65. The experiences and progress of children in care – outstanding
- 7.66. The experiences and progress of care leavers – good
- 7.67. Overall effectiveness – outstanding
- 7.68. This achievement reflects significant progress since the overall good judgement secured in 2022, and Ofsted focused visits undertaken in 2023 and 2024. It also builds on the current ratings of our six children's homes rated good and outstanding.
- 7.69. It's great that Ofsted's findings and judgement have recognised this organisational achievement and highlighted your dedication and ongoing commitment to children, young people and their families.
- 7.70. The following outlines the considerable work and complexity of an ILACS three-week inspection and the demands it placed upon services and practitioners already undertaking their day jobs to safeguarding children and young people in the community.

### **Day one Monday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2025**

- 7.71. The inspectors were offsite for the first week, but the service and project team worked with them daily to be prepared for their arrival on the following Monday for the fieldwork they planned to undertake across the operational teams.
- 7.72. The DCS had a set up meeting with the inspectors and they outlined their requirements for the inspection; they had specific lines of enquiry for Shropshire from the focused visits and performance data and advised they would be seeking evidence to assure themselves these matters were or had been addressed whilst undertaking their work in the service.

### **Week one**

- 7.73. The Timetabling for week two and three was agreed, this requires planning and set up of the meetings expected (usually 4 meetings per inspector), in addition to visits being arranged to meet children and young people in their home and or group that they are attending.
- 7.74. We had four inspectors on site week one and six onsite week three including an HMI for schools, in addition to a specific inspector that undertakes a Quality assurance role.

- 7.75. There were over **95** bespoke meetings arranged, with the DCS, Ofsted Keeping in Touch meetings, staff, partners, adults' services and the Virtual school, CAFCASS, Local Judiciary, Chief Executive, Portfolio Holder and children, young people and their families spoken with. In addition, there were internal keeping in touch meetings held sometimes twice daily with operational Service Managers and relevant internal colleagues joining.
- 7.76. From day one the senior leadership team were working alongside their operational teams and social workers to quality assure their children's records, offer support and be available for de briefing staff as they meet with inspectors to secure any key lines of enquiry. Including during their weekends.
- 7.77. The project team managed all enquiries, performance and children's records system (LSC) colleagues, senior leaders PAs, and support staff oversaw the governance of the inspection and managed the flow of information from ad too the inspectors themselves, as well as ensuring the inspectors diary was secured and all meetings and feedback were successfully implemented and understood.
- 7.78. The IT team secured the inspectors laptops and access to systems and building management colleagues ensured the Ofsted requirements in term of room bookings and locations was in place.

## Day Two

- 7.79. Uploading of Annexe A data requests, these 11 lists of data reflect the whole range of interventions and support being provided for children young people and their families, as well as our care leavers information.
- 7.80. At the time of inspection **2092** children and young people were allocated to social workers, with more being subject to referrals made into the front door requesting potential service.
- 7.81. A list of all the services auditing activity over the last 6 months is also required, **199** completed audits were listed with judgements and children's ID numbers being provided for this period.
- 7.82. The inspectors choose **12** audits benchmarked against the Annexe A data; they interrogated these in relation to the quality and impact of audit practice for the children and young people involved. They also ascertain if the audit judgements are reflective of an organisation that knows what good looks like.

## Day three

- 7.83. Ofsted require the **Information used by the local authority to manage services for children and young people**, we call this The Library in children's services, it expects a wide range of documents used as evidence to assure inspectors again, we know what good looks like. We uploaded **315** separate documents by 12 noon that day to meet the requirements of the Ofsted requests.

## Day four

- 7.84. The local authority shares the documents set out below for each of the 12 children's case records that inspectors chose from the audit list. This included each Child's assessment, Child in need, child protection, care or pathway plan, Chronology, and supervision record. These are collated and quality assured by a team of people prior their upload onto the Ofsted portal.

**Ofsted Inspectors are on site weeks two and three:**

- 7.85. The inspectors met with social workers, early help practitioners, education colleagues, Personal Assistants to Care Leaver (PA's), Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO's), legal colleagues, Permanence Tracking Officers, CAF/CASS, reviewed commissioning work, the judiciary and children, young people and their families, including foster carers and adoptive parents. These **69** meetings all required timely planning, room bookings, team calls arranged as part of the timetabling exercise.
- 7.86. Inspectors met with our care leavers group and spent an evening in Chelmaren Home speaking with children about their lived experience in Shropshire's services.
- 7.87. **92** social workers (including disabled Children's team), and early help practitioners, fostering and adoption workers, independent reviewing officers and virtual school colleagues, all attended meetings with the inspectors directly.
- 7.88. A project team offered daily support to organise, manage, and ensure all activity was timely, planned and secured each day.
- 7.89. The final feedback meeting that included the Chief Executive, The Leader and Portfolio Holder and Senior leadership Team and DFE advisor was held on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2025. Where the Outstanding judgement was announced internally.
- 7.90. Following this the report is written, shared with the Local Authority as a draft for any factual inaccuracies or challenges if required, and subject to Ofsted's rigorous internal Quality Assurance process.
- 7.91. The DCS, Tanya Miles, was able to share the Outstanding judgement with staff, council colleagues, children and young people and partners during a planned event on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> August 2025. This also included the official handover to the new DCS, David Shaw.
- 7.92. The report was published on the 12<sup>th</sup> of August 2025, following the Ofsted Quality Assurance process agreeing the findings and final judgment of Outstanding that was made.
- 7.93. We are very proud of our children, young people and their families, and care leavers who all continue to thrive and achieve their aspirations including education, employment, and training opportunities.
- 7.94. We are very thankful for a staff team that demonstrate their care and advocacy for the children they are working with every day, and this was reflected in conversations, in their records and in the feedback received from the children themselves.

- 7.95. We were also proud that the inspection itself was organised, calm and responsive to all the requirements Ofsted made of us as an organisation. This reflected a professional organisation that knows itself well.
- 7.96. We are pleased that our social work practice, collaboration across teams and services in the council and multi-agency working has been seen by the inspectors and judged as outstanding.

*'By treating our children and young people with respect, love and trust and with the right amount of encouragement we can inspire them to dream big, build relationships and connections that matter and together with kindness and a sense of belonging we can do great things.'*

- 7.97. The recent ILACS has evidenced successful implementation of the vision set "putting love back in the system", this contributed significantly to the outstanding outcome achieved.
- 7.98. The services self-evaluation shared with inspectors demonstrated clear evidence that we knew ourselves well, we were focussed on the right challenges and that the vision of putting love back in the system, alongside a collaborative culture across the service and council had secured the improvements needed in the service. Most importantly the outcomes for our children and young people were consistently good and they were seen to be achieving and thriving whilst being supported by their social workers, and the teams of workers around them.
- 7.99. Direct practice was subject to significant scrutiny and the inspectors found evidence in children's records, speaking with social workers and speaking directly with children, young people and their families that assured them about the outstanding impact our children's workforce was having in their lives.

**The outcomes noted below were all evidenced as the inspectors worked through the system and services during their time with us in Shropshire.**

|                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| We have increased early help provision and pathways and more children and families are benefitting from this.                                                                   | We have decreased numbers of referrals into social care by applying thresholds appropriately and access to the right service for the need presented.                                                    | We are completing assessments more quickly and have clear performance oversight embedded.                                                                        | We are starting more Public Law Outline (pre court proceeding meetings), more quickly and resolving matters more quickly. |
| We are securing permanence outcomes for children including Special Guardianship Orders and Adoption plans securing their futures.                                               | We have more children leaving care than coming into care.                                                                                                                                               | If children need to come into care for their safety this is done timely and effectively.                                                                         | We keep most of our children close or within Shropshire if they do become looked after.                                   |
| We are enabling more children to live either with their family, or within a family environment, stepping them back from residential care effectively when it is right for them. | We know our care leavers needs and enable them to access the offer effectively, keeping in touch and supporting them in the community with education employment and training when appropriate for them. | We are demonstrating our aspirations for our children and young people on their records, that show good understanding of their needs and good outcomes for them. | We are completing care proceedings more effectively .                                                                     |

7.100. The outcomes outlined above were observed throughout the inspectors' visit as they engaged with our systems and services in Shropshire. The service remains committed to embedding the continuous improvement cycle, which now forms an integral part of everyday practice. By maintaining high standards and robust quality assurance processes, we are well positioned to swiftly address any challenges or reductions in performance, ensuring effective remedial action when necessary.

7.101. With the conclusion of the Children's Improvement Board (CIB), a new Ambitions Board for Children in Shropshire is being established. Like its predecessor, this cross-party group will be chaired by the Chief Executive, DCS, Lead Member and attended by multi-agency senior leaders and specialised services. The Ambitions Board will drive the council's vision for children and young people, with agendas focused on sustaining current successes and further enhancing service delivery and outcomes.

7.102. An Ofsted Service Development Plan must be submitted to Ofsted by 19th November 2025; this will form the foundation of the Ambitions Board's work. The inaugural meeting, set for 18th September 2025, will bring together members to co-design the Board's initial priorities, with these and other service improvements incorporated into Shropshire's Ambitions Plan for Children and Young People 2025–2028. Updates on progress towards delivering the Ofsted Development Plan will be reported to Overview and Scrutiny through the performance report.

7.103. The plan will specifically address Ofsted's two recommendations: ensuring meaningful and sustained participation of children, care leavers, and their families in all aspects of strategic planning and service evaluation (including fostering) and strengthening our response to the emotional well-being and mental health needs of care leavers.

- 7.104. Our focus will include building on the strengths of the care leavers' service, which recently achieved a 'good' judgement in its first Ofsted ILACS review, with the goal of securing an 'outstanding' outcome in the next inspection, expected in three years' time.
- 7.105. We will include the priorities agreed together at the first Ambitions Board in the Ofsted Service Development Plan, calling it **Shropshire's Ambitions Plan for the children and young people of Shropshire 2025 – 2028.**
- 7.106. The Families First national agenda is setting the scene for the overarching national requirements of children's services development going forward.
- 7.107. A Families First Partnership (FFP) Strategic Lead, Natasha Moody, has been appointed to drive this agenda for Shropshire across services, the community and all our partnerships. There will be briefings and information shared as the programme of work and plans are secured.
- 7.108. Shropshire Youth Services was announced as one of only 12 national pathfinder areas for the Local Transformation Fund, supported by the National Youth Agency to help create youth services that are sustainable, inclusive and genuinely impactful.
- 7.109. Shropshire continues to participate in the national SEND and AP Change Programme, including the development of the latest phase of exploration to inform national reform in this area. Particular focus is being placed on developing inclusive mainstream practice across all education settings and a range of other specific developments.
- 7.110. These are significant opportunities for Shropshire Children's Services alongside partners and council colleagues to further develop services and practice that will enable children, young people and their families to have increased access to preventative and early help services to prevent escalation and build upon our current youth offer in the community to offer impactful services and additional community opportunities that will enable young people to feel heard and seen in Shropshire.
- 7.111. This outstanding judgement also creates a good opportunity for the service to attract the permanent workers needed going forward. There is work continuing to secure updated adverts and communications that include this achievement to endeavour to encourage more applications going forward.

## 8. Additional Information

- 8.1. The link to the Ofsted ILACS schedule is below for information only, this schedule is updated regularly by Ofsted, it is helpful to retain the link going forward to ensure that you are viewing the most up to date version.

[Inspecting local authority children's services - GOV.UK](https://gov.uk/inspecting-local-authority-childrens-services)

- 8.2 This schedule outlines the nuts and bolts of the process and what Ofsted are looking for in their evidence gathering when working in the Local Authority during

an inspection. This includes data, a library of evidence, direct conversations with the workforce, partners, judiciary and children, young people, and their families.

- 8.3 The Chief Executive and Portfolio holder meet with Ofsted Inspectors to talk with them about the council's vision for children and young people in Shropshire
- 8.4 We share a comprehensive self-evaluation with them; this includes a leadership overview of work delivered to date.
- 8.5 The self-evaluation answers 3 questions:
- What do you know about the quality and impact of social work practice in your local authority?
  - How do you know it?
  - What are your plans for the next 12 months to maintain or improve practice?
- 8.6 We were judged good by Ofsted during the last full ILACs held 7<sup>th</sup> Feb 2022. Two focused visits were held in the Local Authority since that full inspection these are undertaken in relation to a specific theme and help over several days in the Local Authority:
- Children's Service Focused visit 23/11/23 Child Protection work.
  - Children's Services focused visit 30/07/24 Children Looked After.

**Local Government Association national advice and guidance is embedded below:**

Is your council in a strong position to continue to improve outcomes for children and young people and their families?

<https://search.app/nXwDPKxemnTMwZfJ8>

View the top tips from portfolio holders for children's services.

<https://search.app/QvHNJYocmuko2L4i8>

The following guide offers a high-level overview for all councillors of key issues with regard to child safeguarding.

<https://search.app/xwqhkpBJXqSJvPag9>

Every councillor has a role to play in embedding corporate parenting principles and doing all they can to support children in care.

<https://search.app/uLBSkbKacafccREM8>

Is your council doing all it can to improve outcomes for children and young people? This document, specifically developed for chief executives.

<https://search.app/wVkWXG6JVfssDrZG7>

Must-Know\_-Childrens-services-guide-to-effective-cross-council-working-\_Local-Government-Association

<https://search.app/nySX4j5V2c48KCmT6>

## 9. Conclusions

- 9.1. Shropshire Children's Services have demonstrated the positive impact of collaboration with partners (external and internal) and council services to achieve the outstanding judgement following the recent ILACS inspection.
- 9.2. The service is continuously striving to maintain the high standards of practice achieved and looks forward to the impact of the significant national agendas for change further enhancing the outcomes for the children, young people and families of Shropshire.

**List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)**

**Local Member:** All

### **Appendices:**

Appendix A - Inspection of Shropshire local authority children's services

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# Inspection of Shropshire local authority children's services

**Inspection dates:** 23 June to 4 July 2025

**Lead inspector:** Jenny-ellen Scotland, His Majesty's Inspector

| Judgement                                                                | Grade       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families | Outstanding |
| The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection    | Outstanding |
| The experiences and progress of children in care                         | Outstanding |
| The experiences and progress of care leavers                             | Good        |
| Overall effectiveness                                                    | Outstanding |

Children in Shropshire achieve positive outcomes and demonstrate measurable progress due to effective services that comprehensively address their needs and mitigate risks.

Since the last ILACS inspection in February 2022, and particularly since the subsequent focused visit in November 2023, which identified a decline in child protection practice, senior leaders have taken purposeful action to implement a wide range of evidence-based improvements across the service. These improvements are having a discernible and positive impact, enabling vulnerable children, care leavers and families to make and sustain significant change, ultimately improving their lives.

Senior leaders are ambitious, family focused and firmly child centred. Taking a whole-council approach, they have worked closely with political leaders and multi-agency partners, demonstrating unwavering commitment to improving outcomes for children and care leavers.

Leaders have cultivated a culture of ambition and continuous improvement. All areas of service are characterised by many areas of excellence, compassion, and a resolute focus on outcomes. Listening to children, understanding their lived experiences and acting on their views are strongly embedded in practice.

## What needs to improve?<sup>1</sup>

- Meaningful and sustained participation of children, care leavers and their families in the strategic planning, development and evaluation of services across all areas, including the fostering service. (enabler 2, national framework)
- The response to the emotional well-being and mental health needs of care leavers. (enabler 1, national framework)

## The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection: outstanding

1. Children benefit from highly effective early help delivered by skilled professionals who identify and respond swiftly to emerging concerns. The establishment of early help multi-agency hubs in areas of greatest need has helped professionals to work more closely together to provide a robust preventative response to vulnerability and risk. As a result, children receive the right support at the right time, preventing harm from escalating and enabling progress. Step-up and step-down arrangements between early help and social care are effective and well coordinated.
2. The daily 'Pitstop' meeting, led by police and attended by key partners, reviews police contacts where there are no specific identified safeguarding concerns. This enables timely information-sharing and decisions about early help, ensuring that families receive support promptly, preventing escalation of need.
3. When children need help and protection, referrals are made to Compass, Shropshire's 'front door' service. The quality and timeliness of partner referrals are consistently high, with parental consent routinely recorded by most professionals. Initial screening within Compass is robust and effective, ensuring that children and families are swiftly directed to the most appropriate service. Experienced senior social work practitioners make confident, timely and proportionate decisions. Parental consent for multi-agency checks is appropriately obtained, and practitioners understand when to override consent to safeguard children. Practitioners make effective use of children's histories to inform their decisions, ensuring timely access for children to the right level of support. Decisions are well documented and supported by strong management oversight.
4. Managers have embedded a culture of professional curiosity and rigorous practice within Compass. This provides a firm foundation for high-quality assessment and targeted intervention. Team managers systematically audit practice to check that children are receiving the right level of support, taking

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<sup>1</sup> The areas for improvement have been cross-referenced with the outcomes, enablers or principles in the [Children's Social Care: National Framework](#). This statutory guidance sets out the purpose, principles for practice and expected outcomes of children's social care.

action when they are not, fostering continuous improvement and excellence in service delivery.

5. Social workers in the assessment team recognise and respond quickly and effectively to risk. They see children alone, and their records capture children's wishes and feelings. Workers use a range of tools to engage with children and reach a deeper understanding of their lived experiences. Non-resident fathers' views are actively sought to inform assessments.
6. Social workers in the assessment, case management and court teams make good use of research to inform their understanding of the impact of abuse and to help parents understand professional worries for their children. This helps parents to engage in services and make the changes needed for their children. Relationship-based practice shines through children's records.
7. Social workers' assessments are thorough, timely and child centred. They lead to proportionate responses to risk and need. Practitioners engage sensitively with children and families, ensuring assessments accurately reflect the child's lived experience. Strategy meetings and child protection enquiries are comprehensive and include relevant agencies, ensuring a timely response and reduction in risk of harm for children. Children are seen alone when appropriate. Interventions begin promptly, supported by clear management oversight and effective supervision.
8. Child protection conferences are convened appropriately, where a protection plan is formulated to reduce risk and vulnerability for children.
9. Child in need and child protection plans outline clearly what needs to change and the support that children and parents will receive. Plans are focused, time-bound, and aligned to identified risks and needs, ensuring agencies understand what must happen. This helps to improve children's situations in timescales that are relevant to them.
10. Children's plans are reviewed regularly through multi-agency meetings with the professionals who are involved with them and their families. Family engagement and the views of children are reflected throughout, helping to give an accurate picture of the impact of intervention.
11. Information shared at child protection review conferences is thorough and child focused, including detailed analysis and evidence of progress made. Child protection chairs are effective in their challenge and oversight. They are instrumental in progressing children's plans and ensuring escalation when needed. Appropriate use of legal planning meetings takes place if plans are not effective in reducing risk.
12. When risks are not reducing, children are quickly escalated to the pre-proceedings stage of the Public Law Outline. Letters before proceedings are clear and are detailed in articulating social workers' concerns. Comprehensive parenting assessments help determine if parents are successfully able to meet

the needs of their children while receiving multifaceted support. Impact chronologies are integral to assessments and are used well to inform decision-making. An increasing number of children are successfully diverted from proceedings as appropriate.

13. Early help practitioners and social workers use an established tool to manage neglect well and take action when required. This tool is used alongside parents to help them understand where they need to make changes.
14. Children affected by domestic abuse benefit from a strong, coordinated multi-agency response. Social workers understand the impact of domestic abuse on children, and targeted work with parents helps to reduce risk. Where engagement with external services is limited, dedicated family practitioners work intensively with families and offer both group and individual consultancy to support social workers.
15. Swift and effective assessment and planning ensure that risks for unborn children are well understood and managed appropriately. Close partnership work with midwives through birth planning meetings ensures that agencies are working to a coordinated plan to safeguard the child.
16. Family group conferences or family network meetings are routinely considered and used well to consolidate the support network around the child. The early involvement of family members, alongside comprehensive parenting assessments and targeted intervention planning, helps identify the support families need to care safely for their children. This approach is contributing to a reduction in the number of children entering care. When risks escalate, timely and appropriate decisions are made, grounded in thorough, evidence-based assessments.
17. The repurposing of a children's home to provide short-term care and use of the short-breaks provision gives a safe base for children while intensive therapeutic and practical support with parents enables children to successfully return to their family home.
18. Family support workers and the highly effective Stepping Stones service provide practical and therapeutic support to help parents develop safe and appropriate parenting skills. Their work complements that of social workers in achieving positive change. A wide range of support services are available for families, including parenting programmes and interventions for male perpetrators of domestic abuse. These supports are helping families make sustained progress.
19. Disabled children receive highly personalised support from social workers who know them well. Children at risk are visited regularly and seen alone, with nonverbal children supported to communicate through appropriate tools or advocates. Detailed observations inform a dynamic assessment of need, with social workers ensuring that children's voices remain central to planning and decision-making.

20. The initial response to 16- and 17-year-olds presenting as homeless is timely and, for most, appropriate. Workers gather comprehensive information from partner agencies and consider the child's own views. Options for those at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness are thoroughly explored. However, advocacy is not consistently provided at the initial point of presentation.
21. Children living in private fostering arrangements are well supported. Thorough assessments and good management oversight help ensure the suitability of their care arrangements. The fostering service takes a proactive approach to raising awareness through social media, the council website, and by distributing information booklets to all schools in Shropshire.
22. Young carers are identified and visited, although workers' assessments of their needs and their subsequent support plans do not always address their needs well. Groups and activities have been established in some areas; however, provision is inconsistent across the county. Leaders are addressing this through aligning the service with early help.
23. Children at risk of exploitation or who go missing are supported through the TREES exploitation service. Interventions are dynamic and effective, with experienced specialist workers building trusted relationships with children. Comprehensive, targeted plans, underpinned by robust, analytical assessments, help to reduce the risk of harm.
24. Out-of-hour services respond appropriately to calls from professionals, members of the public, families and carers. Experienced practitioners respond effectively to the range of children's needs, supported in their decision-making by accessible senior leaders.
25. The local authority designated officer response to allegations against adults who work with children is highly effective and timely. Experienced and knowledgeable staff ensure continuity of practice. Appropriate action is taken when individuals working with children pose a risk of harm.
26. Effective information-sharing and joint working between relevant teams strengthen the oversight of children who are electively home educated or missing from education. Improved systems and processes enable the earlier identification of vulnerable children, allowing targeted support to improve home arrangements and school attendance.

## **The experiences and progress of children in care: outstanding**

27. Children in care in Shropshire receive an outstanding service that significantly improves their life experiences and outcomes. The edge-of-care service, Stepping Stones, works proactively and creatively alongside social workers, parents and extended family members to prevent the need for children to enter or to remain in care wherever possible. Family group conferences and family network meetings are routinely and effectively used early in the child's journey

to identify potential carers and support within family networks, ensuring children remain safely connected to their families.

28. When children come into care, their needs are already thoroughly understood through comprehensive social work assessments. These assessments inform clear and detailed care plans that demonstrate measurable impact. This provides a firm basis for achieving timely permanence, enabling most children to live in stable, long-term homes where they can thrive. Where appropriate, children live with their brothers and sisters, with additional support provided to manage any risk of placement breakdown.
29. Reunification is consistently considered at each stage of care planning. Strong management and leadership oversight ensure that decisions to reunify children with their parents are informed by thorough, robust social work assessments and detailed risk analysis. Independent reviewing officers (IROs) also play a crucial role in ensuring these decisions are only made when in the child's best interests. Intensive intervention and support for parents and children before, during and after the child's return home help to promote the sustainability of these arrangements. When reunification is confirmed to be successful, workers make timely applications to revoke the care order.
30. Children are continually encouraged and supported to see their family and friends, which helps them to retain a sense of belonging. Parents are well supported to manage this family time in a way that meets their child's needs.
31. Children in care have stable, trusting relationships with their social workers, who know them well and understand their individual needs. Social workers invest time in building significant, long-lasting connections with children, carrying out direct, personalised work using a range of tools tailored to each child. These strong relationships help children to feel safe, ask questions and explore their early life experiences. Social workers respond with empathy, sensitivity and language that makes children feel valued, understood and genuinely cared for.
32. Effective children in care reviews help workers evaluate children's progress and identify next steps. A very high proportion of children attend their reviews and are well supported to express their views and influence their plans. Reviews are held within required timescales and maintain a consistent child-centred focus. IROs build relationships with children and craft review minutes in a way that thoughtfully reflects each child's voice, helping them to feel seen and heard. The IRO footprint is clearly evident in children's records, including regular visits to children between reviews, ensuring that children's views continue to inform and shape their care plans.
33. Skilled, nurturing workers engage children in impactful life-story work, helping them understand their experiences and the reasons they are in care. This work is carried out with considerable care and sensitivity, resulting in detailed life-

story records that help children make sense of their journey and provide an important resource for the future.

34. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children receive effective support; workers demonstrate a good understanding of children's rights and support them in navigating the legal processes related to their immigration status. Care plans are comprehensive and tailored to each child's individual circumstances. Wherever possible, consistent interpreters are provided for children.
35. The response when children go missing from care is highly effective in reducing risk and repeat episodes. Return home interviews (RHIs) thoroughly explore each incident, identifying key factors to inform assessments and analysis. Workers discuss findings in supervision to guide their decision-making and safety planning. RHIs also assess placement suitability and consider alternatives when needed, ensuring that care plans reflect the child's views.
36. Disabled children in care benefit from workers who understand their complex health needs. Practitioners skilfully coordinate input from multiple professionals to ensure both children and their carers receive effective support. Strong partnership working enables children's needs to be met promptly and appropriately.
37. Children's health needs are comprehensively assessed, well understood and met. Emotional health support for children is readily available and wraparound support from children's mental health services helps children and their carers to manage any difficulties, such as self-harm. Effective multi-agency meetings coordinate health support.
38. Workers and carers actively support children to get involved in a wide range of activities that reflect their individual interests and promote their well-being. For children who are returning to live with their parents, there is a clear commitment to ensuring that this continues seamlessly after they return home. Additionally, children are encouraged and supported to attend residential activity holidays, where they participate in sports and recreational experiences that contribute to their development and enjoyment.
39. The Children in Care Council, facilitated by the virtual school, plays a central role in shaping services that affect children. Their contributions include developing a guide for social workers on respectful and child-centred communication, for example, referring to 'child in care reviews' as 'child in care meetings'. They are actively involved in recruitment, participating in interviews for key roles, and redesigning the virtual school website to ensure it is accessible and relevant. Children's achievements are consistently recognised through an annual awards ceremony and personalised letters, cards and certificates throughout the year.
40. The virtual school provides high-quality support that promotes children's educational attainment and progress. Children in care make good progress from

their starting points. Workers' tenacity in ensuring children have access to suitable educational provision is notable. Schools value the support the virtual school provides. Workers closely track and monitor the attendance of pupils. Primary attendance is positive; however, leaders rightly recognise that more needs to be done to improve attendance for older pupils.

41. Unregistered children's homes are used for very few children and only when other options have been exhausted. A very small number of children with complex health needs are placed in two settings that provide the required medical care. There is strong consistent oversight and monitoring of these arrangements.
42. Foster carers feel well supported and valued by a responsive and ambitious leadership team. Better recruitment and retention are increasing capacity, and carers speak positively about the respect shown for their role. However, there are some inconsistencies in accessibility to training, the quality of recording, and embedding children's voices in foster carer recruitment, assessment and review.
43. Adoption services are provided through the local authority's arrangements with the regional adoption agency (RAA), Together4Children. The relationship between the local authority and the RAA is strong. Leaders and managers have a clear vision for the service and have invested in the recruitment and retention of adopters. Adopters are well supported through the assessment process and the placement of a child.

## **The experiences and progress of care leavers: good**

44. Care leavers report feeling safe and secure in their living arrangements, including those placed outside Shropshire. They highlight unwavering support from their personal advisers (PAs), valuing deeply the enduring, trusting relationships they have developed with them over several years, and describing their PAs as reliable sources of guidance, assistance and reassurance. This robust support network significantly reduces their anxieties and fosters their confidence and independence.
45. While they are new initiatives whose impact is yet to be seen, the recent recruitment of a care leaver ambassador and the opening of a new central hub for care leavers reflect a clear commitment to enhancing participation and inclusion.
46. Care leavers are carefully and thoughtfully matched with PAs best suited to engage with and support them. This matching occurs in time to ensure a smooth transition to adulthood, marking the start of a supportive relationship to ensure that young people's needs are met.
47. Care leavers receive regular, purposeful visits from their PAs, often in their homes, to assess the suitability, safety and appropriateness of their

accommodation. This consistent contact helps to build strong, trusting relationships.

48. The current pathway plan format was developed by care leavers in response to feedback from the previous inspection. The result is a clear, accessible document with a summary section outlining actions for both the PA and the young person. Plans are generally of good quality, completed in partnership with young people, and reflect their views well. Most are aspirational and empowering, supporting young people to achieve their goals. Management oversight is evident, with managers often including personal messages of encouragement to the young person.
49. The local offer meets the needs of care leavers. They understand their entitlements and know how to access them. Some support, such as driving lessons, is provided based on individual need. The local authority holds engagement events, including an annual barbecue, which care leavers have requested be held more frequently.
50. The local authority funds an app that offers a range of online resources to support young people's mental health. When care leavers experience mental health challenges, PAs support them to access their GP, who can make referrals to universal services. There are no specific face to face support services accessible to care leavers to help provide immediate emotional health support.
51. Care leavers are supported to access their records, with clear communication to manage expectations around the redaction of sensitive third-party information. Ongoing life-story work is provided to help them make sense of their experiences and understand their journey into and through care.
52. Former unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are supported by an experienced PA with expertise in immigration, alongside a dedicated support worker who is themselves a former unaccompanied asylum-seeking child and care leaver from Shropshire. Both bring valuable insight and empathy to their roles, recognising the need to build trust with young people who may initially be hesitant to engage with professionals perceived as government representatives.
53. Support for care leavers who are parents is delivered with compassion and understanding, focusing not only on the needs of their child but also on helping the young person to recognise and address their own needs.
54. When a care leaver is in custody, PAs maintain regular communication and work closely with probation, prison and housing colleagues to plan ahead and support rehabilitation arrangements. PAs also ensure that young people receive their entitlements while in custody.
55. Care leavers live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs. Joint working with housing services helps to ensure appropriate and well-matched

housing provision. The homeless support worker brings extensive knowledge of housing legislation and availability across Shropshire.

56. Care leavers' independence skills and readiness for adulthood are considered within pathway plans. The local authority provides financial support for private rentals when required. Care leavers benefit from a range of housing options, including trainer flats, temporary accommodation and commissioned supported housing. Young people spoke positively about their housing experiences.
57. Care leavers living outside Shropshire continue to receive consistent support from their PAs, who maintain regular contact and actively help them secure and sustain appropriate accommodation. PAs ensure care leavers receive their entitlements and provide practical assistance, including support with registering with local GPs and accessing emotional health services in their area.
58. When care leavers travel abroad, many do so without support to consider potential risks or develop contingency plans in case they encounter difficulties.
59. Care leavers are supported to find and sustain employment, pursue their future goals and attend university. They are also assisted in accessing apprenticeships and work opportunities. The support provided by the virtual school is having a positive impact. Overall, young people are achieving well academically and benefit from tailored support to meet their individual needs. Former unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are encouraged to pursue diverse career paths and vocational training. Senior leaders recognise the barriers faced by some former unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in accessing education and training and are actively working to address these challenges.
60. Care leavers aged 21 and over who are allocated a PA receive tailored support based on assessed needs, continuing up to age 25. Some also receive support beyond 25.
61. For care leavers no longer allocated a PA, in-touch arrangements are variable. This inspection identified that annual contact with care leavers closed to the service, as required by statutory guidance, had not been in place. Senior leaders have responded swiftly to address this shortfall. A data collection exercise is under way to identify and track this cohort, and a new process has been introduced to improve contact. This includes plans for care leavers who are not receiving an active service to receive a birthday card and newsletter outlining updates to the local offer, along with a voucher.
62. Many older care leavers who are no longer in regular contact with the service reconnect with their PAs when they require support. This demonstrates the enduring relationships PAs build with care leavers. Additionally, those who have more recently ended their involvement receive a detailed assessment and analysis of need that informs the collaborative decision to conclude support.

## **The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families: outstanding**

63. Children's social care is led by a highly experienced and credible director of children's services (DCS), whose leadership is both visible and influential. Working closely with the senior leadership team, she has established a strong and ambitious culture where children are consistently regarded as 'our children' and supported to feel genuinely loved and cared for. This child-centred ethos is embedded across the workforce and strongly reflected in the commitment of the wider multi-agency partnership.
64. Following the focused visit in November 2023, senior leaders responded transparently and proactively engaged external supports, facilitating rapid improvements with positive outcomes for children and families. Identified areas for improvements have been addressed effectively. Family group conferencing delays are resolved, and multi-agency responses to domestic abuse are well coordinated. Strategy meetings and child protection conferences take place promptly with rigorous IRO oversight. Children's plans are clear and relevant and include meaningful family input. Pre-proceedings are timely, and letter quality has improved. Local placements and emotional health services for children in care are well managed and accessible. Management oversight is robust, supported by thorough supervision records and clear senior leadership decisions. A comprehensive quality assurance framework drives ongoing practice improvements. Staffing and leadership capacity are strengthened through effective recruitment and retention.
65. Corporate leadership is strong, demonstrated by the council's political and financial support of children's services. With children's services at the heart of the council, the chief executive and DCS have prioritised early help and prevention, securing significant investment that improves children's lives.
66. Elective members are well informed about the priorities and challenges facing children's services and have expressed a continued commitment to improving outcomes for children and care leavers.
67. The improvement board, recently rebranded the Children's Ambitions Board, chaired by the chief executive, ensures robust oversight, drives improvement and fosters cross-party collaboration. Leaders recognise the need to strengthen the participation of children and care leavers in these strategic forums.
68. Corporate parenting is underpinned by strong leadership and a clear, values-led vision. Senior leaders actively champion their responsibilities, working with partners to promote a shared ambition to be the best possible parents for children in care and care leavers. Children and young people report that workers and their managers are genuinely proud of them and their achievements.

69. The Corporate Parenting Board, co-chaired by the lead member and a care-experienced young person, has delivered improvements in health assessments, emotional and mental health support, and the role of IROs. Care leavers are granted protected characteristic status, giving them priority access to housing and employment opportunities within the council.
70. Leaders and managers prioritise embedding the child's voice. The introduction of an AI tool reduces administrative workload, allowing practitioners to spend more time with children and families and improve the quality of written records. Direct work is well developed, ensuring children's views inform assessment, planning and decision-making. However, while the child's voice is very well established at an individual level, involvement in the strategic planning, development and evaluation of services, while evident, needs strengthening.
71. Leaders demonstrate detailed knowledge of local communities and use this insight to target support effectively, including for rural areas with pockets of deprivation. This has led to tailored services through locality hubs that reach those most in need.
72. A rigorous, strengths-based quality assurance framework underpins the delivery of high-quality services. Regular, comprehensive audit activity supports improvement and demonstrates steady progress in both quality and compliance. This approach supports learning and is driving improvements in practice and outcomes for children and families.
73. The introduction of information management tools has strengthened leaders' ability to identify and respond to emerging trends through effective data analysis.
74. Research-based practice is firmly embedded. Leaders promote a 'do with, not to' relational approach, fostering a culture of effective relational practice where trust and meaningful relationships with children and families are central, resulting in transformative change.
75. Shropshire is an ambitious learning organisation where staff are supported at all levels to develop their knowledge and skills. Comprehensive programmes, such as the Social Work Apprenticeship and assessed and supported year in employment (ASYE), equip practitioners with the skills needed for successful careers and help reduce attrition rates.
76. Managers provide consistent, supportive and reflective supervision, ensuring effective progression of children's plans, with clear management oversight and documented decision-making.
77. Workforce stability benefits children and care leavers by maintaining long-term relationships with workers who know them well. Staff enjoy working for Shropshire, feeling valued and supported by visible senior leadership.

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**Council  
25<sup>th</sup> September 2025**

Item

Public



## Bishop's Castle Arts and Leisure Centre – Approval for decarbonisation and pool renovation projects

|                              |                                                                                  |                                                        |              |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Responsible Officers:</b> |                                                                                  | Laura Tyler – Service Director Commissioning           |              |
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| <b>Cabinet Member:</b>       |                                                                                  | Cllr James Owen – Portfolio Holder Housing and Leisure |              |

### 1. Synopsis

- 1.1 This report sets out a programme of essential repairs and improvements to Bishop's Castle Arts and Leisure Centre (Also known as SpArC). This includes a project to decarbonise the facility and a second project to refurbish the pool, its plant and install easy access steps. The report seeks Council approval for works to be included in the Capital Programme.
- 1.2 The total value of improvements is forecast to be £3.939 million. Of which £680,000 are proposed to come from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL); £2.454 million will be grant aid from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme; £250,000 will be donated by the Bishop's Castle Trustees and the remaining £505,000 from the Council's capital repairs programme. The result will reduce carbon emissions by 70%, reduce running costs and increase expected visitor's numbers and income.
- 1.3 Cabinet considered these projects at their meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2025, where they approved the allocation of CIL funding and endorsed the recommendations to Council set out in this report.

## 2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Bishop's Castle Arts and Leisure Centre (also known as Sports and Arts in the Community or SpArC) serves the communities of the many settlements which make up the large rural area in the southwest of the County including the communities within the Bishop's Castle Place Plan area (Bishop's Castle, Clun, Newcastle, Lydham, Lydbury North, the Stiperstones, Chirbury, Edgeton and Worthen) as well as communities in wider settlements. SpArC provides an accessible leisure centre to a significant population due to relative remoteness of this area of Shropshire. Local primary schools use the pool as the national curriculum requires all children should be able to swim before the move onto secondary school.
- 2.2 SpArC shares a site with Bishop's Castle Community College and is centred around a 20 metre 4 lane swimming pool, with later additions including a sports hall, fitness gym, arts studio, and gallery space.
- 2.3 The centre is currently heated by an aging oil-fired boiler which is expensive to operate, and a new heating system is a priority which also offers the potential to decarbonise the site. The pool hall roof has been severely damaged by recent storms and needs repairs.
- 2.4 In addition, the pool tank and pool plant need substantial repairs and improvement. The filtration system is end of life and slow to recycle water and the pool tank requires constant repairs and relining before a major failure occurs.
- 2.5 The pool is of a traditional build and the construction of a set of easy access steps could be make significant improvements particularly for the elderly and disabled, if a set of easy access steps could be constructed. The provision of these steps will therefore increase the capacity of the facility to cater for growing populations resulting from new developments.
- 2.6 SpArC has the benefit of being very well supported by its local community; there is an active group of Trustees who raise significant funds to provide enhancements to the SpArC site. In previous years they have already raised and invested over £250,000 including the provision of fitness equipment, a cafe, pocket park and donations towards the theatre and arts. To support the pool refurbishment the Trustees, with help from other community groups and parish councils, have raised a further £250,000 towards a new pool liner and easy access steps. This is a generous and unique contribution by a community towards their local leisure centre and is particularly notable when considering the small population in the area.
- 2.7 Making use of a variety of funding sources, a programme of works is proposed which includes two tightly coupled projects. Firstly: a pool refurbishment project centred on the Trustees' generous donation and secondly: a decarbonisation project centred on funding from the government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme. Both projects are already listed in the published Capital Strategy as priority projects and will be managed by the same project team but with different Principal Contractors and separate accounts.
- 2.8 The pool refurbishment project is estimated to cost £1,150,000 to complete. A feasibility study has already been completed utilising £50,000 of SPOG fund. The Trustees have raised and committed £250,000 and the capital finance team have identified £170,000 from the capital repairs budget. Once complete, the pool running costs are anticipated to be £12,000 lower per annum and new users could increase by up to 30%.

- 2.9 This leaves a shortfall of £680,000. At Cabinet on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2025, it was agreed that £300,000 be allocated from the Bishop's Castle local CIL fund and the remaining £380,000 from the Strategic County CIL fund. This allocation of CIL funding across the two different funding streams reflects the role this facility plays to both the local community within the Bishops Castle Place Plan area, and to wider communities in the south of the County. Both allocations have been reviewed and passed by the Infrastructure Investment Group (IIG). Shropshire Council policy requires that CIL allocations in-excess of £500,00, such as this, require Cabinet approval.
- 2.10 For the Decarbonisation project, the Council has been awarded a £2,454,000 grant from the Government's Public Sector Decarbonisation scheme to insulate the whole Leisure Centre and replace the existing oil-fired heating with an all-electric solution. This grant is dependent on the Council providing 12% or £334,695 in match funding which will come from the Capital repairs budget spread over 3 years. Once complete the centre will have reduced carbon emissions by 70% and is forecast to reduce running costs by 5%.
- 2.11 In summary the total cost of both projects is £3,939,095, with 15% coming from the Council's capital repair budget and the remainder from grants, community support, and CIL funding. This represents excellent value for money, is forecast to result in increased visitors and revenue, and lower running costs helping to safeguard the future of SpArC. The report therefore seeks approval for both projects to be included in the Capital Programme and progress to full implementation.

### 3. Recommendations

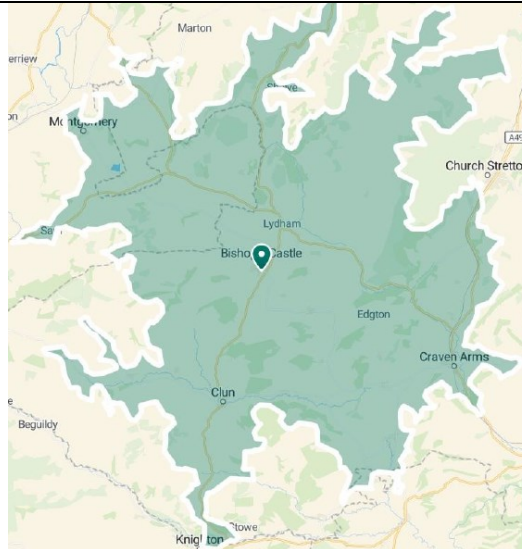
Council is requested to:

- 3.1 Approve the Bishop's Castle Pool Refurbishment Project for inclusion in the Capital Programme.
- 3.2 Approve the Bishop's Castle Decarbonisation Project for inclusion in the Capital Programme.
- 3.3 Delegate authority to the Service Director for Commissioning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Leisure to procure, negotiate and agree the terms of any agreements and contracts necessary and to proceed with the delivery of both projects.

## Report

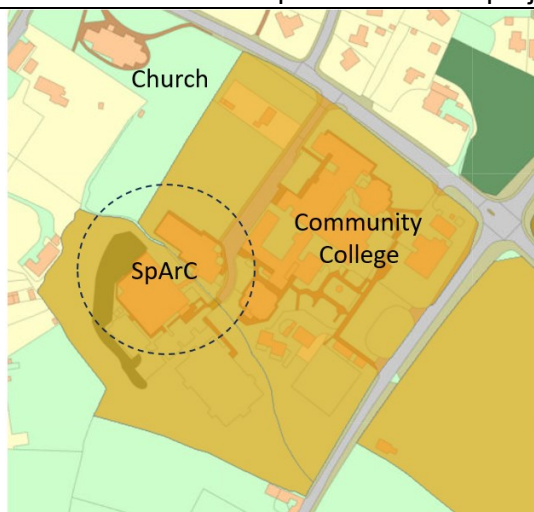
### 4 Risk Assessment and Proposal

- 4.1 Bishop's Castle Arts and Leisure Centre (also known as Sports and Arts in the Community or SpArC) serves a large rural area in the southwest of the County including the communities within the Bishop's Castle Place Plan area (Bishops Castle, Clun, Newcastle, Lydham, Lydbury North, the Stiperstones, Chirbury, and Worthen) and wider settlements outside the Place Plan area. SpArC provides an accessible leisure centre to a significant population due to the relative remoteness of this area of Shropshire.

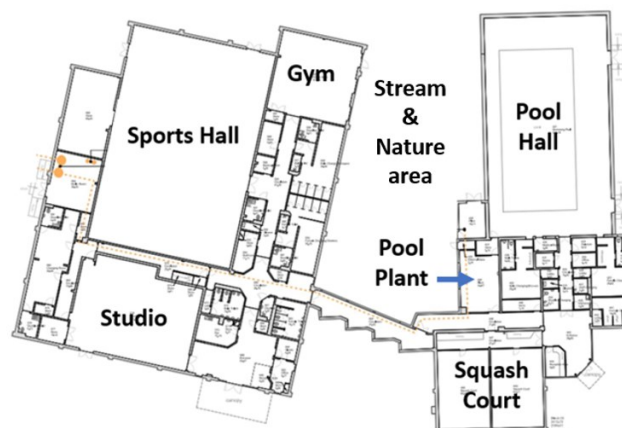


*SpArC Catchment Area – Population with 20-minute drive of leisure centre*

- 4.2 Six local primary schools use the pool as the national curriculum requires all children should be able to swim 25 metres before the move onto secondary school. They include Bishop's Castle, Clunbury, Newcastle, Chirbury, Norbury and St George's.
- 4.3 SpArC has a very wide catchment area covering approximately 434 km<sup>2</sup> or 12% of the County but only contains a population of 13,357 or 4% of the County. Covering such a large catchment area the centre is therefore strategically significant to the southwest of the County. As such maintaining Infrastructure in the community poses a challenge for the Council when facilities have a minimum overhead which needs funding regardless of population size.
- 4.4 SpArC is owned by the Council, operated by the Shropshire Community Leisure Trust and shares a site with the Bishop's Castle Community College. It is centred around a 20 metre 4 lane swimming pool build in the early 1970's, with later additions including a sports hall, fitness gym, arts studio and gallery space.



*Council land ownership*



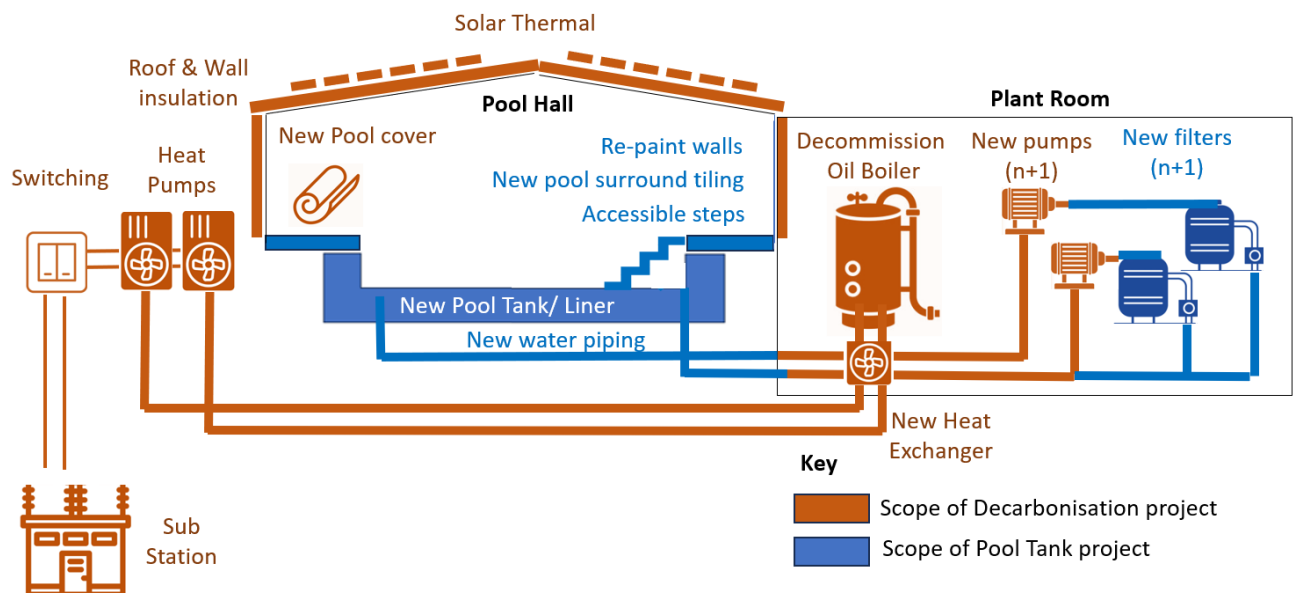
*SpArC layout*

- 4.5 SpArC faces several building challenges. The pool hall roof has been severely damaged by recent storms and needs urgent repairs. The centre is heated by an aging oil-fired boiler which is end of life and expensive to maintain and operate. If the boiler can be replaced by an all-electric solution and the building fabric insulated it provides an opportunity to decarbonise the centre.
- 4.6 The pool tank and pool plant need substantial repairs and improvement. The filtration system is end of life and slow to recycle water and the pool tank needs constant repair and needs relining before a major failure occurs. The pool is of a traditional build with access via ladders. This could be made significantly more accessible to the local community and increase usage, particularly for the elderly and disabled if a set of easy access steps could be constructed.
- 4.7 Despite limited capital funding being available and limited borrowing opportunities for such a small site, two significant funding opportunities have come available: Grant aid from the government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) and funding raising by the local community in Bishop's Castle. It is therefore proposed to implement two tightly coupled projects. Firstly, a project to decarbonise the SpArC site and secondly: a project to renovate the pool and pool plant.
- 4.8 For the decarbonisation project the council has been awarded £2,454,000 grant from the Government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS). This grant is dependent on the Council providing 12% or £334,695 in match funding which will come from the capital repairs budget spread over 3 years. Once complete the project will reduce carbon emissions by 70% and is forecast to reduce running costs by 5%. The scope of the project includes: fully insulating the walls and roofs to contain heat, install of a solar thermal heating system on the pool hall roof, Install of a heat retaining pool cover, replacement of the oil boiler with a heat exchanger and air source heat pumps and install of a new higher powered electricity sub-station.
- 4.9 For the Pool Refurbishment Project, SpArC has the benefit of being very well supported by its local community; there is an active group of Trustees who raise significant funds to provide enhancements to the SpArC site. In recent years they have raised and invested over

£250,000 including the provision of a fitness gym, cafe, pocket park and donations to the theatre and arts. To support the pool refurbishment the Trustees have raised a further £250,000 towards a new pool liner and easy access steps. This is a generous and unique contribution by a community towards their local leisure centre. In addition to the pool liner and new steps, this project will also replace essential piping and the filtration system as well as re-tile the pool surrounds.

4.10 The Pool Refurbishment project will have a significant improvement in accessibility of the pool to the public, particularly to children, older people and the disabled.

4.11 The tight coupling of these two projects is illustrated below:



*Scope of the two tightly coupled projects.*

4.12 Feasibility studies, high-level designs and costings have already been prepared for both projects. One of the risks with refurbishment of old facilities in highly rural areas is finding suitably experienced local contractors to undertake the work. By making use of the Denbighshire Council UK Leisure Framework the projects have identified suitable teams to complete the detailed design, and construction works necessary for both projects.

4.13 If approved, it is estimated that the Pool Refurbishment Project will be completed by spring 2026. The Decarbonisation Scheme (dependent on potential long delivery times of the new electricity sub-station) will be completed by the end of 2026 in advance of the new leisure centre operating contract.

#### 4.14 The following key risks and issues have been identified that relate to the proposals:

| Ref | Item                                        | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Mitigation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Issue - Inflation                           | UK Inflation high and has driven up build costs and materials threatening the financial affordability of the Project and making accurate forecasting difficult.                                                   | UK Inflation has been high during the project planning stage. This has resulted in the project costs increasing substantially in the past two years. The cost model has been uplifted for inflation and includes a contingency – but is work is delayed this will increase costs and potentially threaten the affordability of the project. |
| 2   | Risk - Availability of suitable contractors | Many contractors are wary about taking on refurbishment projects of old leisure centres, particularly in remote locations.                                                                                        | Using Denbighshire Council's UK leisure framework, the council has identified two teams to undertake each project.                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 3   | Risk - Lead time for Sun-stations           | The implementation of new electricity Sub-stations and the supply of increased electricity is undertaken by the local District Network Operator (DNO) and lead times can be long leading to project delays        | The PSDS Decarbonisation Project is dependent on a new Sub-station, and a long lead time has been built into the project timetable.                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 4   | Risk – Additional Plant Failures            | With an old facility, there is a risk that additional problems will arise with Plant and equipment which incur additional costs.                                                                                  | Feasibility studies have been undertaken to assess the costs and both projects include the replacement of key plant and machinery. Both projects have a £50,000 contingency.                                                                                                                                                                |
| 5   | Issue - Availability of Capital funds       | The Council has limited availability of Capita funds and whilst Bishop's Castle has a large catchment area the population is low and limits the income which could be generated to support significant borrowing. | The projects have been seeking alternative sources of funds rather than borrowing – this includes the PSDC grants, Community fund raising from the Trustees, CIL funding and the Capital Repairs and Maintenance budgets.                                                                                                                   |

## 5 Background Information – The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

5.1 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a planning charge that came into force in Shropshire in 2012 following the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations in 2010 (now amended by the Community Infrastructure Levy (Amendment) Regulations 2011). The current CIL Charging Schedule for Shropshire requires developers of new open market housing development (subject to some exemptions) to make a payment to the Local Planning Authority.

5.2 Guidance on the use of CIL states:

*“Local authorities must spend the levy on infrastructure needed to support the development of their area, and they will decide what infrastructure is needed.  
The levy can be used to increase the capacity of existing infrastructure or to repair failing existing infrastructure, if that is necessary to support development.”*

5.3 CIL is most often used to develop road infrastructure, health facilities, additional school capacity and leisure facilities. For this reason, the pool refurbishment project is seeking to draw upon the CIL funds which are available.

- 5.4 Shropshire Council policy on the management of CIL is that all moneys collected in a locality are divided into three CIL funds. The CIL regulations require that the first 15%(capped). collected is allocated to parish or town councils if they do not have an adopted neighbourhood plan. If they do have an adopted neighbourhood plan, the figure is 25% (uncapped). 5% of CIL funds are used by the Council to support its administration. ;Of the remaining 80 (or 70% in a Neighbourhood Plan area)%: 90% of this is ringfenced to fund Infrastructure projects in the Place Plan area where the development occurred (referred to as the CIL Local) and the remaining 10% is allocated to a strategic fund to contribute to projects across the County (referred to as CIL Strategic). The strategic infrastructure monies are expected to be used to fund infrastructure that is essential to the delivery of Shropshire's overall development strategy across Shropshire or outside its boundaries if addresses Shropshire's strategic infrastructure needs.
- 5.5 Whilst the catchment area for Bishop's Castle Leisure Centre covers a large area, the population of the Place Plan area is comparatively low, with more moderate levels of new development occurring over the 13-year lifetime which CIL has been operating. So, whilst the Bishop's Castle CIL Local fund can support a £300,000 contribution, the remaining £380,000 is being sought from the Strategic County wide CIL fund. It is considered this is appropriate given there is evidence the facility is used by residents outside of the Place Plan area, therefore indicating both a local and strategic function of this facility. The Council's Internal Infrastructure Group (IIG) has considered these two requests separately, and in each case have recommended approval for the requested use of CIL funds.
- 5.6 Council delegations specify that allocations of CIL which exceed £500,000 need to be decided by Cabinet. Because the Pool Refurbishment Project is seeking a total of £680,000 of CIL funding this request was presented to Cabinet on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2025 where it was approved.
- 5.7 Council policies require that for capital projects to progress they first need to be included on the Capital Strategy. This includes a list of priority projects which the Council would like to see progress in the medium to long term subject to funding being made available. Developing initial plans and feasibility studies for new Capital projects is generally funded through grant aid or seed funding administered by the Senior Project Officer Group (SPOG). Once a feasibility study has been developed, the estimated costs to complete, the project benefits are known, and sources of funding have been identified then the project can be presented for approval to proceed.
- 5.8 Once a project is approved it is moved from the Capital Strategy onto the Capital Programme and a capital budget is established to allow the work to commence.
- 5.9 Projects of less than £500,000 require Leadership Board approval; Projects over £500,000 require Cabinet approval and projects in excess of £1 million require full Council approval before they can proceed. Both the Pool Tank Refurbishment and Decarbonisation projects are in excess of £1 million and therefore subject to Cabinet approval will require Full Council approval as well. approval; Projects over £500,000 require Cabinet approval and projects in excess of £1 million require full Council approval before they can proceed. Both the Pool Tank Refurbishment and Decarbonisation projects are more than £1 million and are therefore presented here for Council approval.
- 5.10 The Pool Refurbishment project will include two changes which will have a significant improvement in accessibility of the pool to the public, particularly to children, older people and the disabled.

- 5.11 Firstly, reprofiling the pool to be no more than 1.2 metres in the deep end will mean that the entire water area can be safely accessed by children. In traditional pools with a very deep end children and families are mostly confined to the shallow end.
- 5.12 Secondly, the install of easy access steps to replace traditional pool ladders will make the pool accessible to the elderly, parents with young children and people with moderate mobility issues so they can independently enter and exit the water. This will increase the diversity of people who can use the pool for the first time and increase user numbers. The area has a high older person's demographic and poor public transport links to other facilities; therefore, increasing accessibility will support older people to improve physical activity levels.

## 6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 Shropshire Council continues to manage unprecedented financial demands and a financial emergency was declared by Cabinet on 10 September 2025. The overall financial position of the Council is set out in the monitoring position presented to Cabinet on a monthly basis. Significant management action has been instigated at all levels of the Council reducing spend to ensure the Council's financial survival. While all reports to Members provide the financial implications of decisions being taken, this may change as officers review the overall financial situation and make decisions aligned to financial survivability. All non-essential spend will be stopped and all essential spend challenged. These actions may involve (this is not exhaustive):
- scaling down initiatives,
  - changing the scope of activities,
  - delaying implementation of agreed plans, or
  - extending delivery timescales.
- 6.2 Both projects are included in the Capital Strategy, and both have received funding to complete feasibility studies with high level designs and costings.
- 6.3 The forecast costs to complete the Pool Refurbishment Project are £1,150,000 and a breakdown of costings is as follows:

| <b>Pool Refurbishment Project - Cost Summary</b> |                      |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Council Costs                                    | £53,955              |
| Design Costs                                     | £117,242.73          |
| Project Management                               | £86,844.00           |
| Construction Costs                               | £841,958.27          |
| Contingency                                      | £50,000.00           |
| <b>PROJECT TOTAL COST ESTIMATE</b>               | <b>£1,150,000.00</b> |

- 6.4 It is proposed that the Pool Refurbishment Project is funding from the following Sources:

| <b>Funding Source</b> | <b>Type</b>                | <b>Budget</b>     | <b>%</b> |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|
| SpArC Trustees        | Donations                  | £250,000          | 22%      |
| Shropshire Council    | Feasibility fund (SPOG)    | £50,000           | 4%       |
| Shropshire Council    | Capital (Building Repairs) | £170,000          | 15%      |
| Shropshire Council    | CIL (Bishops Castle Fund)  | £300,000          | 26%      |
| Shropshire Council    | CIL (Strategic Fund)       | £380,000          | 33%      |
|                       | <b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>        | <b>£1,150,000</b> |          |

- 6.5 Once completed it is anticipated that the refurbished pool plant will reduce operational costs by £12,000 per annum. In addition, a refurbished pool with easier accessibility will attract additional users and income to the facility; this could increase by as much as an additional 30%.
- 6.6 It should be noted that assigning £300,000 from the Bishop's Castle CIL fund will limit the amount of remaining funds for other local infrastructure projects.
- 6.7 Officers have consulted Sport England and unfortunately there is currently no grant funding available in Shropshire, as grant aid is only being assigned to specific areas of the country as part of their Places strategy.
- 6.8 The Decarbonisation Project is forecast to cost £2,789,095 and the breakdown of costs is as follows:

**Decarbonisation Project - Cost Forecast**

|                            |                   |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Council Costs              | £38,254           |
| Design Costs               | £207,658          |
| Project Management         | £155,571          |
| Construction Costs         | £2,337,612        |
| Contingency                | £50,000           |
| <b>Total Project Costs</b> | <b>£2,789,095</b> |

- 6.9 The Decarbonisation Project is proposed to be funded from the following sources:

**Decarbonisation Project Funding**

| <b>Source</b>      | <b>Type</b>                | <b>Budget</b>     | <b>%</b> |
|--------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|
| Government         | PSDS Grant                 | £2,454,400        | 88%      |
| Shropshire Council | Capital (Building Repairs) | £334,695          | 12%      |
|                    | <b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>        | <b>£2,789,095</b> |          |

- 6.10 The feasibility study forecasts the Decarbonisation Project will result in a 5% reduction in operating costs.

## 7. Climate Change Appraisal

- 7.1 Currently SpArC is heated by an oil-fired boiler – as a result it is one of the largest producers of CO<sub>2</sub> in the Council asset portfolio. The feasibility assessment estimates that the project will reduce the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 274 tonnes per annum, representing a 70% reduction in emissions for the facility.

7.2 In addition, the Pool Refurbishment Project will replace much of the plant and install a new filtration system and reduce the volume of water in the pool. This will also have a significant reduction in the energy required to filter and heat the pool and reduce operating costs.

7.3 Together both projects will make a significant contribution to the Council's net zero policy.

## 8. Conclusions

8.1 The report sets out a programme of essential repairs and improvements to Bishop's Castle Arts and Leisure Centre (Also known as SpArC). This includes a project to decarbonise the facility and a second project to refurbish the pool, its plant and install easy access steps. The report seeks Cabinet approval for the use of Community Infrastructure funds and also seeks approval for the works to be included in the Capital Programme.

8.2 The total cost of both projects is £3,939,095, with 15% coming from the Council's capital repair budget and the remainder from Grants, Gifts and CIL funding. This represents excellent value for money and is forecast to result in increased visitors and revenue and lower running costs, helping to safeguard the future of SpArC. The report therefore seeks approval for both projects to be included in the Capital Programme and the use of CIL funds to complete the Pool Refurbishment budget.

**List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)**

**Local Member:** Councillor Ruth Houghton – Bishop's Castle

**Appendices:**

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