

Birmingham City Council

City Council

13 June 2023



Subject: Executive Business Report
Report of: Cabinet
Report author: Paul Kitson (Director – Place, Prosperity and Sustainability)
Sue Harrison (Director - Children and Families)

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? ☐ Yes ☒ No

If relevant, state which appendix is exempt, and provide exempt information paragraph number or reason if confidential:

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1. On 10th September 2019, Full Council accepted the recommendations of the Coordinating O&S Committee review in respect of changes to the Full Council agenda.
- 1.2. Recommendation 3 of the review requested that the Executive provide an update to Full Council on its work via the provision of an Executive Business Report ('EBR'). EBRs will be provided to Full Council four times per municipal year and will include details of progress made in relation to Council strategic outcomes and priorities linked to two Cabinet Member portfolios.
- 1.3. This EBR provides an update on two Cabinet Member portfolios:
 - Leader Portfolio, with a focus on 'Our Future City'; pages 2 - 12
 - Children, Young People and Families; pages 13 - 37
- 1.4. As we approach the halfway point of 2023, the Council continues to proactively work with local, regional and national partners to drive forward progress against our strategic priorities for the city – striving towards a bolder, better, and fairer Birmingham for all. The ongoing Cost of Living Crisis, including high levels of inflation and energy costs, continues to be a challenge for many of our most vulnerable residents and communities.

- 1.5. However, we must also recognise some of the reasons to celebrate our progress in 2023. The launch of the 'Our Future City Framework' sets out an ambitious long-term vision for the future of our shared city, one in which everyone has an opportunity to aspire, thrive and succeed. We also celebrate the results of our recent Ofsted inspection, which rated our Children's Services 'Good' for the first time in over a decade – recognising the dedication and hard work of all our staff and partners in this area.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That the report be noted.

3 Leaders Portfolio

3.1 'Our Future City' Overview

- 3.1.1 'Our Future City: Central Birmingham 2040 Framework' (OFCF) is a bold plan to transform Central Birmingham into a greener city of more jobs, better transport options and higher quality new homes, and is one of the most important strategies written for the city this century. The plan will break down the physical and perceived barriers between the city centre and the area outside of the Middle Ring Road to ensure growth in the city centre reaches the wider communities.

- 3.1.2 Delivery of the framework's vision would double the amount of green spaces to a level comparable with Vienna and double Birmingham's network of active travel routes to 200km – the same level of healthy transport infrastructure as in Copenhagen, with the ultimate aim for the city to become a benchmark for meeting the challenges of the 21st century in its own right. A significant area of the city is covered by the framework, which replaces the previous successful vision of the Big City Plan, which has run its course and underpins the growth being witnessed today in the city.

- 3.1.3 In addition, the framework outlines the potential to create 74,000 new jobs and 35,000 much needed homes for the city in an area of 1,800 hectares and a population of 130,000 people. A framework of this scale has not been attempted elsewhere nationally or internationally and it represents a step change in how the city will deliver inclusive growth for its residents.

3.2 'Shaping Our City Together' Consultation Process

- 3.2.1 In January 2021, the Council published the 'Shaping Our City Together' document for public consultation. The aim of the document was to start a conversation with Birmingham's communities to create a shared vision for the city.

3.2.2 This was the first document to be released with the purpose of setting out an inspiring vision and strategy for Central Birmingham - one that could create a fair, inclusive, and green place that benefits all. The aim was to take a more collaborative approach with our civic family from individuals, businesses, and charities, to ensure we are creating a shared vision and strategy for the future. The feedback was then used to inform the development of the 'Our Future City: Central Birmingham Framework 2040'.

3.2.3 The 'Shaping Our City Together' document was based around 6 themes to group together the potential actions that will ultimately deliver the framework's vision:

City of Centres

3.2.4 This theme recognises that Birmingham is more than one place - it is a collection of centres of activity that have evolved over centuries. There is the potential to develop this further as a 'City of Centres' - multiple destinations and mixed-use neighbourhoods that attract visitors and succeed as places that are loved by their communities, with a sense of pride and belonging.

3.2.5 Central Birmingham already holds a number of established quarters and neighbourhoods with existing communities, alongside the potential for other areas to grow and provide the new homes and employment space we need as a growing city.

City of Growth for All

3.2.6 Birmingham is the largest city economy in the UK outside of London, and a key driver of growth in the West Midlands' and national economies. A thriving, inclusive, resilient, and liveable Central Birmingham is vital to maintaining this position through improving the quality of life and place and creating the conditions to attract investment. The focus will be on promoting green and sustainable growth.

3.2.7 Our city needs to continue to welcome inward investment and to provide the opportunities for a range of major developments for new homes, workplaces, leisure, culture, and social infrastructure. We also need to ensure that there are the right conditions for home-grown businesses to start-up, thrive and grow - from those serving local community needs to the large businesses serving national and global markets.

City of Nature

3.2.8 The ability to easily access nature within our city is essential to providing a high quality of life, tackling climate change, and creating attractive places to live.

3.2.9 As a whole, Birmingham has a significant amount of green space with several outstanding parks and gardens. However, there are significant gaps in the provision of green space within central areas of the city. This is having a

negative effect on people's health, and with the urban population expected to rise this effect could be exacerbated.

- 3.2.10 The aim is to make a radical transition by putting nature back at the very heart of the city - to be a Biophilic City. Residents, visitors, and workers will be able to access safe and diverse green and open spaces within walking distances of their home and places of work. We can use nature to transform the way we build, design our public realm, and improve connectivity, as well as support the restoration and viability of urban areas ensuring more space for living, working and playing.

City of Layers

- 3.2.11 Birmingham is a unique and distinct city with a wealth of interesting stories, rich heritage, and historic landmarks. As the role and purpose of city centres change and lifestyles and workstyles merge and evolve, it is the sense of community and belonging - the social interactions experienced through culture at all levels - that people will want to come to cities for. The built environment needs to respond to these 'layers' of culture and creativity and enable the city to not only showcase its output commercially as a vital part of our visitor, leisure and night-time economy, but also to celebrate and build on it for its own citizens, for their growth, employment and careers, and the enrichment and quality of life. Our buildings, places and spaces not only reflect the history of our city but present opportunities to forge a new outlook responding to communities that live and work here.

City of Connections

- 3.2.12 Located at the heart of the country, Birmingham is at the centre of the national transport network, with excellent rail and road links, and a major international airport. However, many parts of Central Birmingham are still dominated by vehicles and their supporting infrastructure, resulting in disconnected places, poor public realm and unhealthy living conditions. This is a significant contributing factor to traffic congestion and air pollution.
- 3.2.13 Supporting the comprehensive proposals set out in the Birmingham Transport Plan, the aim is to enable a people-centred approach to connectivity within neighbourhoods, providing walking, cycling and public transport on major routes and reducing the need for cars by making the alternatives much easier, affordable and safer.
- 3.2.14 Increasing reliance upon and general use of digital connectivity opens opportunities for different ways of working and living, but all communities need access to modern infrastructure to benefit from these changes.

City of Knowledge and Innovation

- 3.2.15 Birmingham is a city of innovation and entrepreneurship, with a strong record of being at the forefront of major innovations in industry that have shaped the world we live in today.

- 3.2.16 As we look ahead, it will be crucial to focus on supporting the growth of our knowledge, technology, innovation and creative sectors. This will require a creative approach to adapting the built environment, supporting resilience and growth of businesses, as well as growing a skilled population to compete in an evolving job market.

Consultation Outputs and Feedback

- 3.2.17 The 'Shaping Our City Together' consultation took place over two months between 26th January and 26th March 2021. The consultation was publicised online across numerous websites and social media channels, as well as via local news publications and the trade press. Internally, the consultation was publicised on the Council's social network 'Yammer', in the Council's weekly newsletters and in the Chief Executive's own fortnightly email bulletins, sent to all employees at the Council.
- 3.2.18 This consultation exercise was undertaken in the face of stringent Covid-19 restrictions in early 2021. This meant that face-to-face meetings and mass gatherings were banned for the duration of the consultation period. Therefore, all engagement exercises were undertaken virtually over the internet, using conferencing applications such as Microsoft Teams (MS Teams) and Zoom. This innovative use of digital engagement processes proved to be an advantage, as people wishing to attend meetings did not have to travel to the Council offices in Birmingham City Centre or to another physical venue elsewhere within the city, and instead could easily engage with the consultation from home.
- 3.2.19 Social media engagement was mainly carried out via Birmingham City Council's Twitter page. However, the Council's YouTube account also played a major role, hosting webinars and a series of brief videos introducing the OFCP's six themes.
- 3.2.20 Reaching young people was key to our engagement strategy. Youth Services were commissioned to undertake specialist consultation on our behalf, with activities including an online survey, on street interviews, and a design competition focussing on part of the city. Engagement was also undertaken with universities.
- 3.2.21 Key outputs from the consultation included:
- Over 4,000 people watched the consultation launch livestream (over 48hour period).
 - 233 people responded to the online survey distributed via Twitter.
 - Over 40 formal representations were received from developers, landowners, investors, government organisations, national institutions and local community interest groups.
 - Eight seminars/workshops were hosted on MS Teams, providing a focus upon each of the six chapters or 'city themes' covered in the Plan. The

events were attended by over 50 people from a variety of backgrounds and representing a wide range of different stakeholders.

- Pre-recorded webinar discussions featuring key stakeholders and Council officers, each focusing upon a specific theme covered in the Plan. Collectively, the webinars have gathered over 1300 views on YouTube.
- Separate consultation exercise tailored towards younger people, prepared by Birmingham City Council Youth Services. The consultation was sent to 450 people between the ages of 10 and 19 and generated over 150 responses.
- Major publicity in media (newspaper columns, TV, and radio), including Birmingham Mail coverage of the consultation launch.
- Focused publicity events (People for Public Services and two Universities – Aston University and Birmingham City University).

3.2.22 Overall, the proposals and ideas were well received. There was general support for the vision and city themes. A summary of the feedback received is included below:

Vision

- Heritage and historic buildings should be protected, reused, and enhanced.
- High-quality affordable housing should be delivered.
- Request for high-quality design and vision should address the climate emergency.
- Concern the vision doesn't cover outer areas of the city and that the character of different areas of the city should be protected.
- Need to provide appropriate transport, health, and education infrastructure to meet the demand of new residential development.

City of Centres

- Centres should provide green infrastructure and accessible and appropriate facilities for residents.
- Build on the existing identities of local centres and improve connections between local centres.
- Support local businesses.
- Include opportunities for renewable energy and climate adaptation measures.

City of Growth for All

- Concern regarding impact of tall buildings.

- Improve quality of public realm and ensure new developments contribute to carbon neutrality.
- Avoid gentrification and protect identity of existing centres and communities.
- Ensure new developments and open spaces are fully accessible.
- Deliver employment opportunities for local residents.

City of Nature

- Support delivery of green open space, infrastructure, and proposals to improve the canal network and repurpose roads.
- Increase lighting in parks and open spaces to improve safety.
- Question what ongoing management and maintenance of new green space is proposed.
- Encourage community involvement to enhance local residents sense of ownership of green spaces.

City of Layers

- Heritage and historic assets should be protected and enhanced.
- Commitment to safeguard the culture of the LGBT+ community.
- More investment in culture and cultural facilities.
- Historic buildings that are vacant should be repurposed.

City of Connections

- Support improvements to affordable sustainable travel modes, public transport, cycling and walking links.
- Concerns regarding pedestrian and cyclist safety.
- Need to ensure sustainable travel options are fully accessible.

City of Knowledge and Innovation

- Need to incentivise businesses to relocate to Birmingham.
- Universities to have a role in upskilling tech industries.
- Need to offer learning and education for all levels and abilities, utilising existing libraries and community centres.

3.3 **‘Our Future City Plan’: Delivery Plans for Central Birmingham Areas**

3.3.1 In 2021, following the ‘Shaping Our City Together’ consultation, the City Council appointed a multi-disciplinary team led by Arcadis to support the council in producing delivery plans for each area within the Central Birmingham area, to inform the development of a framework. The aim was to

take the themes and consultation feedback and examine each area in detail to create up to date plans and delivery strategies, including feasibility and viability studies and potential concept/outline designs, for bold proposals that demonstrably meet the Framework's vision.

- 3.3.2 The preparation of these plans is an essential first step in guiding future housing development, economic growth and place making in the area. They establish a context for future due-diligence development briefs, development of local planning policy and planning applications as well as aiding interest from development partners and investors. Where appropriate, key proposals and principles will be enshrined within the review of the Birmingham Local Plan and become planning policy in the future.
- 3.3.3 The team focussed on the following areas: Knowledge Quarter and Nechells, Digbeth and Bordesley, Highgate and Balsall Heath, Edgbaston, Ladywood, and Hockley.
- 3.3.4 These areas were defined by their geography, characteristics and connections rather than political boundaries. They also reinforce a key objective of the framework to break down the physical and perceived barriers between the city centre and the areas outside of the Middle Ring Road to ensure growth in the city centre reaches the wider communities.
- 3.3.5 The delivery plans were developed in consultation with key stakeholders internally and externally, including landowners, developers, public sectors agencies and other council departments such as Housing, Transportation and Route to Zero. Where appropriate, high level delivery data for new housing growth, new employment areas, active travel routes and new or improved open spaces was identified. The delivery plans include key interventions and proposals identified and broken down into delivery phases.

3.4 **Development of the Our Future City Framework**

- 3.4.1 The delivery plans contain an extensive amount of detail that would not be appropriate or accessible to publish as a document for public consultation. Therefore, the team focussed on crystallizing this information into the 'Our Future City Birmingham: Central Birmingham Framework 2040'.
- 3.4.2 For the purposes of making the framework more accessible, the delivery plan areas were consolidated into five Central Areas:
- **City Heart:** Bull Ring, Colmore Business District, Snowhill and Steelhouse, Southside, Town, Westside;
 - **Central North:** Eastside and Aston Triangle, Gun Quarter, Nechells, Newtown;
 - **Central East:** Bordesley, Digbeth, Small Heath;
 - **Central South:** Balsall Heath, Edgbaston, Highgate;

- **Central West:** Hockley, Jewellery Quarter, Ladywood, Spring Hill.

3.4.3 This draft framework sets a strategic vision for central Birmingham's future, and our aim of creating a fair, inclusive, and green place that benefits all our communities. It provides an overarching strategy to address the challenges the city faces, and unlock opportunities for all.

3.4.4 It supports the Birmingham Local Plan review by identifying key areas with potential for change. It also sets out proposals and the infrastructure to support the levels of growth we need to achieve.

3.4.5 The bold proposals included in this framework set a programme of work for the next 20 years. Where appropriate the proposals will be embedded into the statutory planning process, collaboratively shaping the city alongside the Birmingham Local Plan and other tools such as Supplementary Planning Documents and the emerging Design Code.

Vision and Core Principles

3.4.6 The framework sets out a deliberately bold and aspirational vision for the city:
'By 2040 Birmingham will be a leading international city, operating on a global stage, where prosperity is shared by all – happy, healthy and affordable. Our connected, culturally distinct neighbourhoods showcase the best environmental quality, resilience and adaptability.'

A city proud of our unique identity and diversity that embraces technology and creativity, beauty, and imagination.'

3.4.7 The core principles underpinning this vision are:

- Inclusive
- Creative
- Resilient
- Connected

Delivery Approach

3.4.8 The Council has a strong track record of delivering transformational change in the city. Since the days of the Highbury Initiative in the 1980s, the Council has been at the forefront of identifying bold visions and proposals that have enabled the city to reinvent itself and address the challenges of the time.

3.4.9 The framework will continue this journey and bring together a comprehensive approach to delivery that will provide the basis for the Council and its partners to support the delivery of projects.

3.4.10 There is a strong history of partnership working in Birmingham which has delivered major projects over the years such as the new Library and the transformation of Paradise Circus. This will continue with the bold Proposals outlined in this framework that will be driven forward through joint working

between the Council, West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), Homes England and the West Midlands Growth Company (WMGC) to develop an integrated approach to target investors. The new Devolution Deal for the West Midlands is a game changing opportunity to accelerate delivery of proposals within the framework.

- 3.4.11 Building on the existing public engagement work done to date, there will be regular and meaningful engagement in the delivery of the framework, with the role of the community built into the overall governance arrangements. The Council will actively work with stakeholders in the area to deliver the visions for the Central Areas and secure high-quality development. Over the next 12 months we will set up governance arrangements to develop key proposals and bring together the relevant stakeholders through structures such as Project Boards.

Links to Existing Strategies

Housing Delivery

- 3.4.12 The framework identifies a number of Housing Action Areas where a broad mix of new homes should be developed to accommodate a range of family and household sizes, including multi-generational occupation. Existing housing in these areas could be improved or retrofitted to make them fit for the future.
- 3.4.13 The Council's Birmingham City Housing Strategy (2023– 2028) is a high-level plan that sets out our vision for housing, with a delivery plan for how the Council and partners will ensure we meet the housing aspirations of our residents. Proposals for Housing Action Areas within the framework will be brought forward in line with the strategy to ensure there is a joined-up approach to delivery.

Property and Site Development

- 3.4.14 The Council's Property Strategy sets out how we are taking a long-term strategic approach to how we utilise our unique asset base ensuring we maximise commercial and social returns by re-aligning the City Council's property to act as a catalyst for development. Where appropriate the Council will consider how best its assets can enable and deliver proposals within OFCP in a way that drives inclusive economic growth.

Sustainable Transport

- 3.4.15 Many of the OFCP proposals are captured within the Birmingham Transport Plan 2031 and it's through this important strategy that delivery will be brought forward. With initiatives such as the £5bn City Regional Transport Settlement there are significant resources available to support projects.

Social and Cultural Infrastructure

- 3.4.16 With the creation of a significant number of new homes, investment will be required to ensure the appropriate services are in place so that they become

functioning and sustainable neighbourhoods. When new infrastructure is needed, innovative models for delivery and service provision should be explored, for example, community and social facilities will be an integral part of the proposals at Ladywood and Smithfield.

Headline Outputs

- 3.4.17 To ensure that Birmingham becomes a healthier, walkable, liveable, thriving city by 2040, the framework aims to:
- Double the amount of green space in the city, from 15% to 30%
 - Double the amount of active travel routes, from 100km to 200km
 - Deliver 35,000 homes
 - Create 74,000 jobs
- 3.4.18 These outputs will deliver significant outcomes and benefits to the city ranging from increased employment and fairer pay for residents to an increased supply of affordable housing.

3.5 Launch of the Our Future City Framework

- 3.5.1 A number of events are being held across May and June 2023 to launch the Framework to a range of audiences, including local communities, national and international investors, developers and national government.

The UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum (UKREiiF)

- 3.5.2 On 16th May 2023 the Council launched the Framework at UKREiiF in Leeds. UKREiiF is attended by Government, investors, developers, local authorities and public sector partners and is the UK's premier event that connects people, places and businesses to accelerate the Levelling Up agenda, whilst unlocking sustainable, inclusive and transformational investment across the UK.
- 3.5.3 The framework was received to national acclaim and generated significant interest in Birmingham as place to live, invest and do business.

Highbury Hall

- 3.5.4 Symbolising the spirit and importance of the Highbury Hall Initiative the Framework was launched at an event on 25th May 2023 for local stakeholders, community groups and investors.

All Party Parliamentary Group for Levelling Up Birmingham

- 3.5.5 The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Levelling Up Birmingham (Levelling Up APPG) was established in early 2022 to promote Birmingham's levelling up ambitions on a national and international stage. It is run on a cross-party basis, co-chaired by Preet Gill MP (Labour, Edgbaston) and Gary Sambrook (Conservative, Northfield).

- 3.5.6 The next business meeting of the Levelling Up APPG on 5th June 2023 will be used to promote the Our Future City Framework to an audience of MPs, Members of the House of Lords, senior civil servants and London-based developers and investors. It will provide an opportunity to discuss how the Council can work with national stakeholders, including national government, to deliver the ambitions set out in the Framework.

3.6 **Further Consultation and Approvals**

- 3.6.1 Following the launch at Highbury Hall on 25th May, a formal 8-week period of consultation has now commenced. An engagement strategy has been developed to guide the delivery of a coordinated programme of consultation activities, to meet the requirements of relevant regulations and our adopted Statement of Community Involvement.

3.6.2 Consultation activities include:

- Online questionnaire using the council's consultation forum BeHeard;
- A notification letter/email to the planning consultation database and all who responded to the previous consultation;
- Press release and social media posts signposting the public to consultation material;
- Videos explaining the proposals and encouraging people to respond to the consultation;
- Printed copies of the framework, and questionnaire with freepost address will be available at local libraries and the Council's Woodcock Street office;
- Use of existing networks and organisations in the framework boundary; and
- Several drop-in events across the framework area with consultation materials and officers available to answer questions.

Timeline for approval

- 3.6.3 The Framework needs to be approved by the City Council in a timely manner to set a clear vision for the city, and ensure the guidance has the desired effect on planning and investment decisions.

3.6.4 Approval milestones include:

- Start of public consultation on draft framework – 25th May (lasting eight weeks)
- Review consultation feedback and prepare final framework – Summer 2023
- Approval of final framework by Cabinet – Autumn 2023

4 Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families

4.1 Context

- 4.1.1 Birmingham is one of the youngest cities in the United Kingdom, with 36.6% of our 1.14 million residents aged under 25. As both a city and a Council, we have a duty to ensure that all our children and young people get a good start in life, with equal opportunities to aspire and succeed. This is particularly challenging in the current context, with the long-running impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and increasing levels of deprivation due to historically high levels of inflation.
- 4.1.2 In 2022, 37.3% of Birmingham pupils were eligible for free school meals, 14.8% above the England average. 51% of children under 16 live in the 10% most deprived areas, with nearly 43% (over 100,000) of our children living in relative poverty.
- 4.1.3 This update provides an update on progress made in the Children, Young People and Families portfolio over the last year.

4.2 Cabinet Member Priorities

- 4.2.1 The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families has identified a series of priorities for the next twelve months. These are as follows:
- 4.2.2 Continue to build on the improving services being delivered with our Birmingham Children's Trust and partner agencies.
- 4.2.3 Continue efforts to ensure that our services are sustainable, compliant, and designed to deliver best outcomes for children, young people, families, and communities, through working with our partners and wider City Council team.
- 4.2.4 Continue to ensure everything we do is inclusive for all our children and young people from all communities, backgrounds, and needs.
- 4.2.5 Embed our Improving Services for Children and Families Plan which brings together improvement and transformation activity that impacts on children, young people, and their families. This plan seeks to drive forward the short and medium-term work to strengthen and improve services for children across the Council.
- 4.2.6 Continue to work with key partners to widen access to Early Education Entitlement (EEE) and improve Early Years multiagency arrangements with health colleagues.
- 4.2.7 Continue to work with our Department for Education (DfE) appointed commissioner to transform and improve services for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in line with statutory requirements. This will enable us to deliver sustainable, well performing services with inclusion of children and young people at their heart, through delivery of the

Accelerated Progress Plan and action plans within the SEND and Inclusion strategies.

- 4.2.8 Deliver on our SEND sufficiency plan to ensure we continue to increase capacity to meet the education needs of our children and young people with assessed needs.
- 4.2.9 Further develop our Children and Young Persons' Travel Service with a robust eligibility process that identifies the needs of the young people we support, ensuring that transport is suitable for their needs and encourages their development. This will include development of a travel menu that will include promotion of personal transport budgets, and a Travel Training service to support development towards independent travel.
- 4.2.10 Strengthen approaches to identify, recognise and respond to the vulnerability of specific groups of children and young people including additional action to ensure:
- Children missing out on education are identified and supported to quickly return to school/education.
 - Robust arrangements are in place for children and young people who are Electively Home Educated.
 - Children supported by the Virtual School receive a stable education and are enabled to achieve their academic potential.
 - License functions for Child Employment and Chaperones are improved to ensure a timely and appropriate response.
- 4.2.11 Commission the Healthy Child Programme to align with the developing Family Hubs Model, to achieve the best outcomes for children and young people 0-19.

4.3 **Recent Ofsted Inspections**

Local Authority Children's Services 20th February to 3rd March 2023

- 4.3.1 At the most recent inspection of our children's services earlier this year Ofsted judged Birmingham as being good in each of the areas inspected. Areas inspected included:
- the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families.
 - the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection.
 - the experiences and progress of children in care.
 - the experiences and progress of care leavers.
- 4.3.2 Working together with Birmingham Children's Trust and our partner agencies we are continuing to get better in all areas of service, and this is providing improved outcomes for Birmingham children, including those in care, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, and care-experienced young people.

- 4.3.3 Our children's social care services had previously been graded 'Inadequate' by Ofsted since 2010 and had been failing for longer. The City Council took the decision in January 2017 to deliver its social care services through a Trust, under the leadership of Andrew Christie as Chair and Andy Couldrick as Chief Executive of our Birmingham Children's Trust which launched in 2018, supported by a board of executive directors and independent non-executive directors.
- 4.3.4 The 2023 Ofsted report stated: *'Since the last inspection in 2018, much progress has been made by Birmingham City Council and Birmingham Children's Trust in improving the experiences and outcomes of their children. Children are now safeguarded through effective 'front door' arrangements, thorough child protection assessments and a strong response to safeguarding children at risk of exploitation.'*
- 4.3.5 Ofsted gave the following feedback on Birmingham's children's services:
- 4.3.6 On the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families:
- 'The Trust has made strong progress in most areas which required improvement at the last inspection, and pace has been sustained through the pandemic and beyond. Political leaders give great priority to children in Birmingham. Despite the financial pressures the council faces, investment in strengthening services in response to increased demand is a continuing commitment.'
 - 'There has been a positive shift in the quality and impact of partnership working between the council and the Trust, along with other key strategic allies. This is particularly evident in the implementation of the early help strategy, with many more families receiving effective help at the right time.'
 - 'The response to exploitation through the EMPOWERU (contextual safeguarding hub) service is a real strength.'
- 4.3.7 On the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection:
- 'Since the inspection in 2018, Birmingham Children's Trust and partners have developed and implemented strong early help services for children and families. Children and families benefit from an effective early help offer, with services that support them at the lowest level of intervention. Children receive a timely and thorough assessment of their needs that leads to effective plans that improve their experiences.'
 - 'The emergency duty service responds to children's needs in a timely and proportionate way. The service interacts and aligns with daytime and weekend services, with effective handover arrangements to daytime services.'

- 'When children are identified as being at risk of harm, there is an effective response through timely child protection strategy meetings, which are overseen well by managers and result in clear actions.'
- 'Views of children, parents and professionals are sought to inform assessments and, as a result, child protection enquiries are thorough and lead to children receiving the right level of support.'
- 'Children and families benefit from the timely allocation of social workers, who commence assessments promptly. The views of children and adults are threaded throughout the assessment. Strengths and protective factors are clearly identified and inform analysis and appropriate decision-making. Management oversight consistently informs next steps.'

4.3.8 On the experiences and progress of children in care:

- 'Children enter care in a timely manner and when it is in their interests to do so. Decisions for children to come into care are appropriately overseen by a senior manager. There is a clear rationale and children reviewing their records would understand why decisions were made about them.'
- 'Children's identity needs are well considered when seeking an appropriate placement match. Careful consideration is given to sibling relationships, with effective together or apart assessments helping to determine appropriate placement needs. This enables children to live with their brothers and sisters when it is in their best interests.'
- 'Children are encouraged and supported to keep in touch with important people in their lives. Family-time arrangements are in line with children's needs. Social workers reassess arrangements when circumstances change, or children express views of not wishing to see parents.'
- 'Thorough court social work assessments are reducing the need for the number of expert and independent social worker assessments. This is contributing to improved timescales and, as a result, decisions about children's long-term plans are made sooner.'
- 'Children's wishes and feelings are well considered and integrated into care plans, for example, their wishes around family time.'
- 'Children leave care to return to their families when it is right to do so.'

4.3.9 On the experiences and progress of care leavers:

- 'Care-experienced young people benefit from personal advisers (PAs) who make time to develop strong and supportive relationships with their young people, understanding their lived experiences and their needs.'
- 'The local offer for care-experienced young people is comprehensive and is readily available in a range of formats. Care-experienced young people are familiar with the offer and appreciate the range of support it provides.'

PAs routinely share the offer and discuss it with young people but are always conscious of the need to ensure that young people fully understand their options and make well-informed choices.'

- 'Care-experienced young people are actively involved in a range of events, conferences, and forums. These are a regular forum for providing information and exploring opportunities, but also for care experienced young people to showcase their achievements, meet up with others and feel valued.'
- 'Care-experienced young people who are parents feel particularly involved in contributing their voice. They feel that what they say is listened to and makes a difference, such as the development of a pregnancy pathway. They value participation opportunities as social events and feel less isolated as a result. They feel connected to senior leaders and feel part of a large family.'
- 'Accommodation options for young people are carefully considered with the young person's input and in their best interests. The majority are in suitable accommodation.'

Areas Identified for Improvement

4.3.10 Ofsted found that the following areas need to improve including:

- the effectiveness of the response to domestic abuse.
- earlier pre-birth assessments to support early permanence planning, and the timely realisation of permanence plans and legal status for children in stable placements.
- earlier engagement of personal advisers for children leaving care.
- consistency of written plans.

4.3.11 An action plan will be drawn up to respond to the areas identified for improvement.

4.3.12 We are on an improvement journey with our children and young people's services to ensure all our children and young people thrive and realise their potential and ambitions.

Birmingham Youth Offending Service Inspection

4.3.13 Birmingham Youth Offending Service was inspected by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation in December 2022. While the service is judged to be Requires Improvement, the report has recognised the considerable work that has been undertaken in improving the service.

4.3.14 During the inspection, HMIP identified some areas of significant improvement. The inspectorate acknowledged the commitment of the Partnership Board and the substantial work that has been invested in developing and enhancing the Board.

- 4.3.15 Inspectors identified several areas where more work is required, all of which were already understood by the service and featured in our service development plan. We are determined to continue to transform and modernise the service as we wish to deliver the very best services to our children, families, victims, and communities.

4.4 **Supporting Care-Experienced Young People**

- 4.4.1 As corporate parents, elected members have a duty to support and look after young people in our care as we would our own children, affording them the same life chances and providing them with appropriate support and guidance.
- 4.4.2 We need to work with our partners to put in place policies that promote better outcomes for our care experienced young people. We need to ensure that all our practices and policies in Birmingham readdress the imbalance in outcomes for those with care experience, to protect and support our children and care experienced young people from discrimination and lack of access to opportunities. As such we are seeking to increase the pathways providing care experienced young people with meaningful and supported apprenticeships and career opportunities and mentors that can continue to support them.
- 4.4.3 Our care experienced people have told us the significant challenges and stigma they face which includes discrimination and a lack of security, when they begin their adult lives, which is a huge transition and major step forward to independence. There is much we have done but we still have a way to go. Our care experienced young people are our responsibility and the protected characteristic proposed will support us to continue to do what we can to help realise their, and our, ambitions for them.
- 4.4.4 The Birmingham Children's Trust are doing some incredible work in supporting our children and young people in care and supporting our care leavers in ensuring they are supported with housing and receive council tax exemptions which we intend to build on.

Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic

- 4.4.5 In April 2023, Full Council approved the motion for 'care experience' to be recognized as a protected characteristic, whereby we have resolved to:
- formally support the Show Us You Care Too campaign and adopt 'care experience' as an additional equality strand alongside the protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010.
 - formally call upon our partners to treat care experience as a Protected Characteristic.
 - lobby Government to amend the Equality Act 2010 to include care experience as a protected characteristic.

- continue to build on the work of our Children's Trust and to continue to support the efforts of our Corporate Parenting Board.

4.5 **Children and Families Improvement Programme**

4.5.1 In January 2022, the Children and Families Directorate embarked on a wide programme of improvement. The 'Improving Services for Children and Families Plan' was launched to bring together into one plan all City Council improvement and transformation activity that impacts on children, young people, and their families. This plan seeks to drive forward the short and medium-term work to strengthen and improve services for children across the Council.

4.5.2 The work in this plan sits alongside work to develop and deliver our longer-term vision for children and young people in Birmingham through our partnership Children and Young People's Plan 2023-2028.

4.5.3 The Improving Services for Children and Families Plan sets out the activity that will support the Directorate, alongside colleagues from across Council, to deliver the vision for children and young people:

Our vision is that Birmingham Children Thrive, all children and young people are safe, healthy, included, confident and achieving. Our children and families will be supported by a Children and Families Directorate that has strong governance and management and a strong front line working with our partner organisations across the city as one system putting children and families at the heart of everything they do.

4.6 **Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND)**

4.6.1 In September 2018, as a result of an Ofsted/CQC Inspection of SEND services, Birmingham received a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) outlining 13 areas of significant weakness. The local area was judged unable to meet the needs of children with additional needs/SEND through appropriate provision.

4.6.2 A re-inspection by Ofsted and CQC from 24th to 27th May 2021 looked at Birmingham's provision (for children with additional needs/SEND) and confirmed (in the letter dated 6 Jul 2021 from the chief inspector): *"The area has made sufficient progress in addressing one of the 13 significant weaknesses identified at the initial inspection. The area has not made sufficient progress in addressing 12 significant weaknesses."*

4.6.3 Since 2021, Birmingham has been under a statutory direction with John Coughlan as independent Commissioner appointed by the Minister. The SEND Improvement Board (SIB) has been in place since December 2021, drawing together the most senior strategic leaders from all relevant stakeholders

across Birmingham. John Coughlan chairs this group and is accountable to Ministers for the progress made by the local area to address the areas of significant weakness and to monitor the performance against the outcomes required.

Accelerated Progress Plan

4.6.4 Birmingham's SEND partnership, consisting of council, local and national health partners and school leaders developed the Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) to address the areas of significant weakness.

4.6.5 All the elements of the plan were grouped together into four objectives:

- System Leadership (Objective 1)
- Getting the Basics Right (Objective 2)
- Working Together Well (Objective 3)
- Pathways (Objective 4)

Areas of Progress

4.6.6 As recognised by John Coughlan in his most recent report to the Secretary of State, there have been '*a number of significant and welcome areas of progress and development in Birmingham SEND*'.

- We have an improved, co-produced process and system for Educational Health Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA). Improved timeframes have ensured more appropriate support is delivered to CYP to meet their needs earlier.
- The SENAR service has greater consistency and retention of staff compared to the same time last year.
- The capacity to complete reviews and assessments of need is much more appropriate compared to the same time last year.
- The SENAR service is much more accessible with dedicated phone lines for each member of the team operational since January 2023.
- We have increased the average number of annual reviews being undertaken per month from 352 (2021/22) to 690 (2022/23)
- Health partners have worked and reduced waiting times for assessments in the past 9 months.
- We are investing in the 'The Balanced System' for Speech Language and Communication needs.
- The Local Offer website has been updated and there has been a demonstrable uplift in users.
- 99% of school phase transfers for EHCPs were issued within the statutory deadlines in 2023. This compares to 0% in 2021.
- Fewer complaints are being received by the SEND service and there has been improved position in relation to mediations and tribunals in the last six months.

Inclusion Strategy

4.6.7 A new Inclusion Strategy was approved by Cabinet on 21st March, linking closely to the Birmingham Change for Children plan and containing three key principles:

1. Recognition of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
2. Enabling children, young people, and young adults to thrive is everyone's responsibility and success is dependent on strong and effective partnership working.
3. Some children, young people and young adults currently need support in order to thrive and achieve as well as their peers.

4.6.8 The 'Inclusive City' steering group will drive the inclusion agenda and support other task and finish groups turning strategy into delivery – cross partnership, multi-agency working.

Developing Local Provision Phase 1

4.6.9 Phase 1 of the Developing Local Provision (DLP) project saw a £14 million investment into mainstream schools and early years settings to develop SEND assistance. This led to very successful outcomes and progress e.g.

- 29% increase in SEND pupils achieving the expected standard – Year 1 Phonics screening.
- 18.6% increase in SEND pupils reaching early learning goals in Reading.

4.6.10 Funding has been agreed for a second phase of the DLP to continue with embedding inclusive practice. Non-negotiable KPIs will be in place for Phase 2 relating to improving attainment, progress, attendance and reducing suspensions and exclusions for children and young people with additional needs.

4.6.11 Services for children and young people with SEND and their families are still not where they should be and there is still a significant distance to travel. However, the early signs of improvement are now becoming more substantial and sustainable, providing a strong platform for continued improvement. Stable leadership is in place in this area, as acknowledged by the Commissioner in his most recent report.

4.7 Annual Education Performance Report 2022

4.7.1 The Birmingham Education Partnership is commissioned by the Council to deliver school improvement in maintained schools.

4.7.2 The Annual Education Performance Report 2022 was published last month. This is the first publication of annual assessment results since 2019 due to the

cancellation of 2020 and 2021 assessments during the pandemic. In the summer of 2022, all exams returned to normal after the pandemic, and some adaptations were in place for specific key stage assessments.

- 4.7.3 In Early Years, 62.7% of Birmingham pupils achieved a Good Level of Development compared to 65.2% nationally. The proportion of children achieving a Good Level of Development in Birmingham as well as nationally has reduced since 2019 but the gap between Birmingham and national has reduced to 2.5% (from 3.8% in 2019).
- 4.7.4 At Key Stage 1, while still behind the national average, pupils in Birmingham narrowed the attainment gap for at least the expected standard in Reading and Writing in 2022. For Maths, the attainment gap remained static. Birmingham is above Core Cities and our statistical neighbours averages in all three subjects, most notably in Reading and Writing, where Birmingham is around 2.0% above its statistical neighbours.
- 4.7.5 The progress of children from Key Stage 1 to 2 continues to improve in all subject areas. Progress in Maths continues to be above the national average. Progress in Reading and Writing is showing definite improvement from 2019 with both subjects above national.
- 4.7.6 48.6% of disadvantaged children in Birmingham reached the expected standard for Reading Writing and Maths, 6.0% above national. For children eligible for free school meals, 48.2% reached the standard, 6.6% above the national average.
- 4.7.7 Birmingham has a higher proportion of secondary schools rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted than the national average. In 2022, Birmingham's Key Stage 4 Progress 8 score of 0.07 is above the state funded national average of -0.03. This means that pupils in Birmingham made more progress from key stage 2 to the end of key stage 4 than those with a similar starting point nationally.
- 4.7.8 Pupils with SEND in Birmingham make weak academic progress when compared with pupils nationally. The Accelerated Progress Plan includes several measures to closely monitor this and ensure that improvements are made.

4.8 **Children out of school**

- 4.8.1 In April 2023, a new post of Assistant Director – Thriving Children and Families was established to take responsibility for all the Council teams that work directly with children, young people, and families regarding vulnerable learners.
- 4.8.2 We provide targeted support for those children who are, or at risk of becoming, persistently absent. Good school attendance is important for children - those

who do not attend regularly cannot achieve their potential in exams, miss out on social aspects of school and can find it difficult to maintain friendships.

4.8.3 The directorate is working closely with schools to support them to improve attendance, particularly those pupils whose attendance rate is of concern. Schools will always work with families to address any issues or concerns and taking action against families for attendance matters is a last resort.

4.8.4 There are several, often complex, reasons why children may go missing from education. These may include (but are by no means limited to): SEND; issues where children are newly arrived to the country or have an insecure immigration status; family homelessness or residence in temporary accommodation; factors around supply of school spaces; and risks around serious youth violence and exploitation. The complexity of this area requires a holistic approach whereby we work constructively with schools, families and support services to ensure that vulnerable children do not miss out on their right to education.

4.8.5 A new partnership Early Help Inclusion Panel was established by Birmingham Children's Trust's Early Help Team and the Council's Tackling Exclusions Group in Autumn 2022, to promote inclusion and prevent exclusions in Primary School age children. The panel has representation from all partners to ensure a multi-agency approach to inclusion and will work in partnership with other agencies to best improve outcomes for children.

Exclusions and Suspensions

4.8.6 We are developing proactive approaches to support schools with relational practice approaches, and to challenge schools where exclusions and suspensions could be avoided. This is underpinned by improvements in data collection to inform help inform authority actions.

4.8.7 Our teams are working with City of Birmingham School (COBS Pupil Referral Unit) to develop use of turnaround places that enable children to maintain their school place and to support mainstream schools to develop effective behaviour support strategies.

Supporting Children Without a School Place

4.8.8 Children who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) without a school place are referred to the Home Bridging Team which develops a package of support for the child. This includes fortnightly safe and well checks and provision for home tutors whilst the child is awaiting a full-time school place. The Children with EHCP Placements Team work to secure a full-time school place for the child. For all other children, the School Admissions (In-Year Admissions) team work to support children back into school. Elective Home Education children whose education is found to be unsuitable are supported to return to school education.

Children without a school place

- 4.8.9 Children not in full time education are a key priority on the Improving Services for Children and Families Plan. The teams within Thriving Children and Families are currently working collectively to review all internal processes regarding children without a school place. In addition to the establishment of a new service area, and additional investment in strategic leadership, we are significantly strengthening senior leadership oversight through improved data dashboards and have commenced dip sampling quality assurance of practice.

Silent Voices, Hidden Lives - Children 'Out of Sight' of Services

- 4.8.10 The following actions are being taken to develop children out of sight services:
- Get the basics right.
 - Deep dive into service areas to review leadership, processes, practice, culture.
 - Ensure services understand statutory guidance and are meeting responsibilities.
 - Appropriate governance, oversight and accountability, corporate safeguarding
 - Strategic use of data across the partnership to improve visibility of children.
 - Construct environments for integrated assessment to wrap around families.
 - Review the outputs of the system and what is working well.
 - Follow children and young people across systems to ensure join up.
 - Maximise opportunities to listen to the views and experiences of children and families.
 - Capitalise on existing partnerships to extend opportunities for joint working.
 - Build opportunities for learning and development, sharing of practice wisdom.
 - Instil reflexive practice through high support, high challenge, continuing professional development (CPD) and supervision.
 - Listen to the workforce.

Elective home education

- 4.8.11 The Elective Home Education team in the Children and Families Directorate works with schools and families to promote inclusion, to help children stay in school and avoid elective home education where possible, engaging with partner agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and to ensure that families that wish to home educate are well connected to services and sources of information.
- 4.8.12 Named officers maintain contact and share information with families to establish a positive foundation for future working. The service works interdependently with School Admissions, School Attendance, the 14-19

Team, Birmingham Children's Trust and SEND services to bridge and broker services to families, particularly where the need for support escalates or where families wish to request a school place following a period of home education. A supportive relationship with Birmingham Children's Trust has been established with a senior social worker from CASS supporting case reviews and decision making in partnership with the Elective Home Education team.

4.9 Safeguarding Policy

4.9.1 In December 2022, the (annual) Corporate Safeguarding Policy 2022 was approved by Cabinet and was implemented with immediate effect. This policy sets out the legal framework and wider safeguarding context that the City Council should operate within.

4.9.2 The policy provides guidance for all Birmingham City Council staff, Elected Members, volunteers and individuals, consultants and agencies contracted (and sub-contracted) by Birmingham City Council who may come across concerns regarding the safeguarding and protection of children, young people, and adults within the context of their work.

4.9.3 The policy also sets out our responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and protecting both children and adults at risk. It also sets out the methods by which the council will be assured that it is fulfilling its duties.

4.9.4 By knowing and being aware of our safeguarding responsibilities, each one of us is helping to keep vulnerable people safe. This means that all staff, councillors, volunteers, and the service providers we commission must be aware of their safeguarding responsibilities.

4.9.5 The Council has established a Corporate Safeguarding Network, chaired by the Director of Children's Services, as the designated person with overall responsibility for safeguarding of children and young people at Birmingham City Council. All Council Directorates have nominated representatives to participate in the work of the Network.

4.10 Early Years

4.10.1 Birmingham has 1218 early years and childcare settings across the city, which are a mixture of Private, Voluntary, and Independent settings and schools. The Early Years and Childcare Service works with providers to ensure there is enough, good quality childcare for children aged 0-14 (16 with SEND) and access to early education places for all 3- and 4-year-olds and targeted 2-year-olds.

4.10.2 There is a range of support that includes information, advice, challenge and CPD opportunities to the workforce. The service also ensures that there are enough children's centres to deliver the core purpose and improve outcomes

for young children and their families. The service oversees the quality assurance of provision and integration of services.

What has gone well over the last 12 months?

- 4.10.3 The percentage of 2-year-olds accessing Early Education Entitlement (EEE) continues to increase. We recognise that the whilst the performance sits well below the national level, each term we have seen an increase on the take-up percentage which is now more comparable to pre-Covid.
- 4.10.4 Supporting early year settings, Early Years Consultants (EYC) are now completing engagement visits for all group care providers rated good or outstanding. The visits are being prioritised by the date of the last inspection and the RAG rating they have been assigned. These visits are an opportunity to signpost providers to the universal services offered by the service and external programmes such as the DfE Covid Recovery Programme.
- 4.10.5 The introduction of the 'Birmingham Transition Approach' is going well. The approach has been developed by a multi-agency team including the Parent Carer Forum. This started in May 2022 and has been further developed over the last year. All 10 districts are offering network sessions focused on transitions (summer term 2023). All EYC visits include questions to promote the Birmingham Transition Approach sharing information about reception class offer day and support available to parents without a school place offer.
- 4.10.6 Integrated working with Birmingham Forward Steps through the Early Years Health and Wellbeing (EYHWB) contract continues to progress. The Health Visiting teams are integrated within the overall contract and management arrangements of Birmingham Forward Steps and are located within children's centres. Children and Families are seen as part of the Healthy Child Programme and there is a performance target for children's centres to undertake Early Help assessments.

What difference are we making to the lives of children and young people?

- 4.10.7 We know that the biggest impact to a child's outcomes at the end of the Foundation Stage is having had access to their Early Education Entitlement (EEE). By driving up our take-up rates we are ensuring a greater number of disadvantaged children are having the opportunity to access good quality Early Education which will enhance their development, support more children to be school ready leading to better outcomes when they are 5.
- 4.10.8 We are funding WellComm toolkits in all Early Years Education settings and providing training for practitioners specifically linked to Speech, Language and Communication. The Speech and Language UK project has been a positive extension of our local WellComm project. Feedback from the Early Talk and Early Talk Boost has been very positive, and it has also allowed settings to notice patterns and trends in their setting that they may not have known without this project. All settings have found that their 2-3-year-old group is

outperforming their 3-4-year-old group. This is key as we know the 3-4-year-olds would have been more affected by the impacts of COVID-19 compared to the 2-year-old group. It is also vital information that we can share with all Birmingham schools so that they are aware of the communication and language areas of development that this project is identifying.

- 4.10.9 Through the EYHWB contract with Birmingham Forward Steps (BFS), children and families are now benefitting from integrated and collective working between Children's Centres and Health Visiting teams. BFS partners have strong links with Early Help/Birmingham Children's Trust and work collaboratively as evidenced by presence at CASS front door..

What are our plans to maintain/continue to improve in the next 12 months?

- 4.10.10 We will continue to focus on driving up participation in the early education entitlements including the new entitlements for working parent announced in the Government's Budget in March 2023. As part of this we are working on a collaborative project with NESTA aimed at improving the take up of early education in our diverse communities which will result in a data tool that can be used within the City Observatory and will enable us to target and address barriers to take-up within specific communities/areas of the city.
- 4.10.11 Improving Outcomes through Transition and Speech, Language and Communication - Our priority now is transitions for children moving this September. We will be working with admissions to ascertain key information regarding which settings feed into each school, with the aim of sharing this information with Schools and Private, Voluntary and Independent providers (PVI), so they know where their children are coming from/going to. In June 2023, in partnership with schools and Maintained Nursery Schools, we will facilitate pilot transition cluster events. This offer will be extended to all 10 districts next summer. These cluster transition events will be an opportunity for Schools and the PVI's to meet up to discuss transition for the children starting school in September 2023. We will continue to extend the project work across early years. The Balance System and Family Hubs will support a consistent approach to Speech Language and Communications (SLC) evidence informed interventions including WellComm and Early Talk and Early Talk Boost.
- 4.10.12 Workforce Development - This is a significant priority area. In partnership with the West Midlands Stronger Practice Hub, we will strengthen communications with the sector to better support providers to access the training and development opportunities available to them.
- 4.10.13 Development of Family Hubs - Leading the Home Learning Environment (HLE) and Early Language Support (ELS) work strand of the Family Hubs Programme, ensuring that this builds on current work within the service such as the Balanced System and Birmingham Early Years Networks.

- 4.10.14 Information and Systems development - An area we need to improve is the information available to parents. We are working on completing several improvements to our data and information systems which are linked to Impulse Nexus. This will give us enhanced data and information storage solutions which allows better reporting, better data matching and a more coherent way of storing data and information. We will continue to review the website to ensure it is easy to navigate and information being provided is accessible, relevant, and accurate.

4.11 **Children and Young People's Travel Service**

- 4.11.1 An Assistant Director for the Children and Young People's Travel Service (CYPTS) took up post in January 2023 and progress continues to be made to improve the service.
- 4.11.2 The CYPTS now has a central database of students and contracts (365) which will significantly improve the data processing that underpins most of the service operation functions.
- 4.11.3 New Application and Eligibility Panels have ensured a robust application process that identifies needs, manages demand, and ensures a sustainable service that protects provision for students and families that need Transport support whilst encouraging parental involvement and student development.
- 4.11.4 The new CYPTS Travel Training Service has been a great success story and many more students are now able to access public transport to support school attendance and engagement with local community and services.
- 4.11.5 Recruitment has started to the new approved structure for the service, giving greater security to the service and ability to move to locality working, developing greater relationships with local stakeholders and families.

4.12 **Youth Service**

- 4.12.1 Birmingham Youth Service operates from 16 centres in Birmingham and works with young people aged 11–25 with the core group being 13 – 19 years old. It is an open access service open to all young people.
- 4.12.2 Most of our youth centres are in areas of high deprivation and therefore reach the most vulnerable. In addition to our youth centres, we also deliver city-wide project work in priority areas such as sexual health, youth violence and youth voice.
- 4.12.3 Birmingham Youth Service empowers young people to achieve and live their best life by creating a safe space where they can access high quality youth service. The Service worked with 7,010 individual young people and had 97,245 attendances in 2022/23.

4.12.4 Our 16 safe spaces and the relationship built with the young person creates the right environment for the young person to feel safe and have a trusted adult to share their concerns and fears as well as their hopes and aspirations. It also allows the youth worker to get to know the young person and help them to overcome their challenges and barriers as well as reaching their goals and aspirations.

4.12.5 Each youth centre provides:

- Information, Advice and Support to young people by a qualified youth worker
- A safe place for young people – somewhere they can be emotionally and physically safe.
- A positive relationship with a “trusted adult” (the youth worker) which is built on honesty, respect and is non-judgemental.
- The Umbrella Scheme – provides sexual health programmes, STI testing and condom distribution.
- Targeted programmes – examples include PVE, youth violence, sexual health, health, and employment.
- Opportunities for young people to get involved in activities, examples include drama, sports, events, residential experiences.
- Volunteering Opportunities
- Youth Participation – an opportunity for young person’s voice to be heard.
- Intensive support for NEET young people
- Resilience 2 Resolve Youth Violence programme

4.13 **Support to Families Through Household Support Fund and Holiday Activities and Food Programme**

4.13.1 Over the last few years, we have been able to support families over school holidays with the Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF). The programme provides supports families, children, and young people to access sports and other activities as well as healthy food during school holidays.

4.13.2 The programme is the biggest of its kinds in the country helping children, young people and their parents have fulfilling, active, fun-filled, and healthy school holidays. There are lots of events, free ideas, and resources for keeping children and young people busy, indoor, and outdoor games, cookery skills, arts and crafts, sports, fitness and dance, health and wellbeing, quizzes, park activities, nature trails and more. The holiday clubs are designed for children who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals.

4.14 **Sufficiency**

4.14.1 Two applications submitted by the Council for the creation of free schools for children with special educational needs were approved by the DfE earlier this

year. The extra places that will be provided by these new schools will ease pressure on Birmingham's existing special schools and ensure children are able to access the provision they need. Unlike the usual free school process, the council will take the lead on identifying an appropriate sponsor to run the school, though the final decision will lie with the school's minister.

4.15 Overall Performance Indicators

4.15.1 The table below illustrates corporate performance KPIs reported for 2022/23:

Report Cycle	1			2			3			4		
Measure Title	Target	Result	RAG	Target	Result	RAG	Target	Result	RAG	Target	Result	RAG
Absence Rate: Primary	4.00%	5.00%		4.00%	5.00%		4.00%	5.00%		4.00%	6.90%	
Absence Rate: Secondary	6.00%	6.30%		6.00%	6.30%		6.00%	6.30%		6.00%	8.60%	
BCT Measure: Average social worker caseload	15	19.7		15	20		15	18		15	18	
BCT Measure: Percentage of children in care experiencing three or more moves within a year	10.00%	7.00%		10.00%	8.00%		10.00%	8.00%		10.00%	9.00%	
BCT Measure: Percentage of children who become the subject of a Child Protection plan for a second or subsequent time within the last 2 years	10.00%	11.00%		10.00%	12.00%		10.00%	12.00%		10.00%	12.00%	
BCT Measure: Re-referral Rate	22.00%	18.70%		22.00%	15.00%		22.00%	21.00%		22.00%	21.00%	
Care leavers in suitable accommodation aged 19, 20 or 21	93.00%	92.00%		93.00%	90.00%		93.00%	91.00%		93.00%	93.00%	
Early Years Entitlement: Percentage of 2-year-olds accessing Early Education Entitlement (EEE) (compared to statistical neighbours and national average)	72.00%	67.00%		72.00%	67.00%		72.00%	69.00%		72.00%	67.00%	
Early Years Entitlement: Percentage of 3 and 4-year-olds accessing 15 hours Early Education Entitlement (EEE)	92.00%	86.00%		92.00%	86.00%		92.00%	91.00%		92.00%	90.00%	
Number of children and young people (aged 5-16) with an EHCP awaiting specialist placements for more than 12 weeks	0.00%	0.00%		N/A	244		N/A	278		N/A	327	
Number of individual children attending the HAF programme: Winter holiday							15000	13104		15000	13104	
Number of meals taken up by children through the HAF: Winter holiday							60000	58787		60000	58787	
Number of NEET's aged between 16 and 18 engaged in support to help them into education, training, apprenticeships and jobs	1049	1112		1049	1127		1049	725.3		1049	871	
Percentage of 16 and 17 year olds that are Not in Education, Employment or Training'	5.00%	3.50%		5.00%	3.80%		5.00%	2.20%		5.00%	2.70%	
Percentage of care leavers who are in Education, Employment, and Training	62.00%	63.00%		62.00%	62.00%		62.00%	60.00%		62.00%	61.00%	
Percentage of new Education Health Care (EHC) plans issued within 20 weeks, excluding exceptions	65.00%	68.90%		65.00%	63.00%		65.00%	65.00%		65.00%	67.00%	
Primary school exclusion rate	0.01%	0.02%		0.01%	0.02%		0.01%	0.02%		0.01%	0.02%	
Proportion of eligible pupils transported to school	99.50%	1		99.50%	99.90%		99.50%	99.98%		99.50%	99.50%	
Secondary school exclusions rate	0.10%	0.12%		0.10%	0.12%		0.10%	0.12%		0.10%	0.12%	
Special School Exclusion rate	0.05%	0.07%		0.05%	0.07%		0.05%	0.07%		0.05%	0.07%	

4.16 Birmingham Children's Trust

General Update and Context

4.16.1 Birmingham Children's Trust was established in 2018 by the City Council. Its job was to build a new organisation that would establish the conditions that enabled good social work to thrive in the city, after many years of 'Inadequate' Ofsted judgements. I am pleased to report that in March the Council approved a new 10-year contract with the Trust. In April Ofsted published the report of its inspection of all Trust services, all rated 'Good', and on (26 May the Government confirmed they have lifted the Improvement Direction on the Council after over ten years)

- 4.16.2 These achievements are as a result of extraordinary hard work and commitment from everyone in the Trust, superbly led by its directors and assistant directors, and of some real support and commitment from partners in public and voluntary services right across the city, starting of course with Birmingham City Council.
- 4.16.3 The removal of the government's Improvement Direction after 10 years is a significant milestone and testament to the hard work of everyone across the Trust and Council along with our partners. We know there is more to do but we are providing much better outcomes for our children and families and these improvements are ongoing and sustained.
- 4.16.4 The Council would like to put on record our thanks to Andy Couldrick and Andrew Christie for their fantastic work over the last few years. Andrew intends to retire, and the Council has agreed to Andy assuming the Chair's role once a replacement Chief Executive is recruited. We wish them well, and acknowledge the massive contribution that they have made to the health, safety and wellbeing of our most vulnerable young people.

Current Update

- 4.16.5 We continue to manage unprecedented levels of demand in all areas of our work. Caseloads in some parts of the service are higher than we would wish, and we have sought to support practice by moving resources to establish new and different services.
- 4.16.6 Care numbers have risen, but in line with our projections. However, care costs have risen more steeply, a consequence of a broken market, insufficiency, the impact of regulation and, critically, a sharp rise in the degree of complexity of need we are dealing with.
- 4.16.7 The numbers of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children arriving in Birmingham have also impacted upon the numbers, as they become children in care, and then care leavers. A relatively recent feature, driving up numbers, is the placement by the Home Office of children into adult hotels in the city. These young people have been initially mis-assessed as adults at port of entry and are then assessed and cared for as children by the Trust.
- 4.16.8 Recruitment and retention remains a challenge. We are simply unable to compete with the rates paid by social work agencies and, as authorities get into trouble, increasingly they reach for whole teams of agency workers to pick up work: the hourly rates paid are high. While the region works to address this, a national solution is needed. The Government, in its response to the Care Review, has produced some bold proposals to tackle this issue.
- 4.16.9 Despite the challenges we face, performance has remained strong, quality of practice has improved, the range of services we offer has grown, and we remain optimistic about our work, our partnerships and our impact on children, young people and families.

Contract Review

- 4.16.10 In March 2023 Cabinet agreed a new 10-year contract term. This reflects the confidence that has built in the Trust over its first five years of life, as well as the depth of relationship with the Council, both elected members and officers.

Performance and Inspection Outcomes

- 4.16.11 In 2022/23, the Trust has performed well in relation to the contractual performance indicators.
- 4.16.12 Areas of particularly strong performance in the year have included placement stability for children in care; care leavers living in suitable accommodation; timely reviews for children in care and initial child protection conferences.

Ofsted Inspection

- 4.16.13 In April, Ofsted published the outcome of the ILACS inspection that took place from 20 February to 3 March 2023. It judged children's social care services in Birmingham to be Good. This comes after a decade of 'Inadequate' judgements up to 2018. In effect, services have improved to Good in a five-year, single inspection cycle. That two of these five years were spent in unprecedented circumstances of pandemic, lockdown and post-pandemic readjustment, the achievement is all the more noteworthy.
- 4.16.14 Ofsted made four recommendations, for the Trust and the wider partnership, which will help services to further strengthen:
- the effectiveness of the response to domestic abuse.
 - earlier pre-birth assessments to support early permanence planning, and timely action to progress permanence plans for children in stable placements through changes to legal status.
 - earlier engagement of personal advisers for children leaving care.
 - consistency of written plans.
- 4.16.15 The Adoption service was inspected in December 2022 and was judged to continue to be Good with an Outstanding judgement for Leadership and Management.
- 4.16.16 Our Fostering service is Good.
- 4.16.17 Charles House residential home was inspected in April 2021 and judged 'requires improvement'. Ofsted's visit in December 2022 judged the home to be Good with Outstanding for leadership and management.
- 4.16.18 Ofsted undertook an assurance visit of Edgewood Road on 28 March 2023. Whilst the home remains 'requires improvement to be good', Ofsted

acknowledged that previous concerns had been addressed and no further requirements were placed on the home.

Youth Offending Services

- 4.16.19 A youth offending services inspection in December 2022 judged the service as 'requires improvement'. During the inspection, HMIP identified some areas of significant improvement. The inspectorate acknowledged the commitment of the Partnership Board and the substantial work that has been invested in developing and enhancing the Board.
- 4.16.20 Inspectors identified a number of areas where more work is required, all of which were already understood by the service and featured in our service development plan. We are determined to continue to transform and modernise the service as we wish to deliver the very best services to our children, families, victims, and communities.

Finance

- 4.16.21 A contract sum has been agreed for 2023/24 of £272m, which includes an allowance of 8.25% for inflation pressures to enable the Trust to increase foster care rates and other care-related payments. This represents a real term increase of £24m and reflects the overspend for 2022/23 reported previously.
- 4.16.22 We will continue to work closely with the Council, and work hard to manage and mitigate the financial pressure, the key drivers of which include:
- increasing demand for services.
 - growing numbers in care.
 - complexity of need and risk.
 - absence of appropriate care placements.
 - rising numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking young people.
- 4.16.23 Children's social care, nationally, remains under acute pressure with rising demand, lack of sufficiency and reducing numbers of foster carers. It is understood the Government is planning for a further £1.7bn investment in 2024/25 across social care. It will be for the Council to determine the split of this between adults and children's social care.

Risks or Areas of Concern

- 4.16.24 The Trust continues to be a key part of system leadership across the city and will want to play a full role in the Year of Change for Children. There are some key partnership challenges that we need to address in the coming year. Successful progress will impact positively on demand for Trust services as well as promoting better outcomes through different and earlier response. Examples include:

- responding to the challenge of domestic abuse and homelessness for women and children – this drives a substantial amount of work in the Trust. The absence of any perpetrator programmes in the city is a particular concern, and one noted by Ofsted.
- children's and parental mental ill health: increasing amounts of Trust resources used as a consequence of delivery and definitional issues around mental health. A better joint, and joined-up, response is required. Birmingham's CAMH services have recently been inspected and judged 'Inadequate' by the CQC. This might offer an opportunity to collaborate over different and more integrated and collaborative service offer
- contextual and transitional safeguarding: increasing the strength of the partner response to safeguarding risks outside of the family and across the life course.
- early intervention and prevention: the work in the Council is progressing and there are real opportunities to build greater prevention into the role of universal services in the city.

4.16.25 We are well-placed to continue to rise to these challenges and maintain the trajectory of improvement we have set hitherto, maintaining effective collaboration with the Council and all of our partners.

4.16.26 We will respond to our recent inspections, of the Trust's social care service and of the Youth Offending Service, and continue to drive improvement.

Impact from the Cost of Living/Energy Crisis

4.16.27 The Trust continues to work with the Council and other partners to develop a coherent response to the cost-of-living crisis and the challenge of keeping warm this winter. We are concerned to ensure that family poverty is addressed and supported rather than referred to the Trust as a type of neglect. We are working with BVSC to ensure that the Household Support Fund is delivered quickly and efficiently to young people and families experiencing hardship. We have implemented hardship projects for care leavers, asylum seekers and children and families with no recourse to public funds as part of this. The announcement that the HSF will extend into 2023/24 is very much welcomed and allow the Trust to work with the Council to continue to support vulnerable children and families.

4.16.28 We will continue to offer innovative holiday schemes in some of our most challenged communities, using Holiday Activities with Food resources and working in partnership with the Council, StreetGames, our delivery partners, and local voluntary organisations. We will ensure we target those who are vulnerable or 'hard to reach', working with our third sector partners including Bfriends, our own established charity.

Protected Characteristic: Care Experience

4.16.29 The Independent Review into Children's Social Care recommended that the "Government should make care experience a protected characteristic". It

asserted that this would provide greater authority to employers, businesses, public services and policy makers to put in place policies that promote better outcomes for care experienced people.

- 4.16.30 In Birmingham we have around 850 care-experienced young people aged 18-21 years and around 440 aged 22-25 years. Over the last 3 to 4 years on average 250 care experienced young people turn 18. As is reflected nationally 40% of care-experienced young people aged 19-21 are not in any education, training or employment (NEET). Figures nationally for all 16-25 years is 10.4% (2022 ONS figures). Whilst congruent with national averages it illustrates the challenges that care-experienced young people face locally when making their way into adulthood.
- 4.16.31 In April 2023 Full Council approved the motion for Care Experience to be recognised as a Protected Characteristic. For the motion to be realised it is important that a clear set of outcomes be identified. Key actions need to be scoped out, aligned and approved so that this forms the basis for the response of the council, the trust and its partners to the motion and its duty to fulfil its corporate parenting responsibilities.

Pressures and Challenges

- 4.16.32 Recruitment and retention in key teams and specialisms. Specifically, agency social workers: this has remained persistently higher than we would want. While we perform better than regional and statistical neighbours, we continue to refine and improve our offer to make the Trust an attractive place to come, and to stay, to build a good social work career.
- 4.16.33 There have been significant issues with access to financial reporting, identification of income, management reporting etc as a result of the implementation of Oracle.
- 4.16.34 School sufficiency, and in particular an ongoing need for additional SEND places within special and mainstream schools. Capacity has been significantly increased in recent years and we will continue to focus on increasing capacity. We are developing a robust SEND sufficiency strategy that will underpin the commissioning of appropriate special school places. Since 2015, special schools have admitted over 600 more pupils. We are currently working with five of our special schools on capital proposals to increase places further. DfE has approved a bid for two new special free schools.
- 4.16.35 It has been a challenging year, but we are seeing improvements throughout the directorate which we will build on.