

A group of diverse children are running joyfully in a schoolyard. In the foreground, a child with a large afro hairstyle is running towards the camera, wearing a red and white checkered shirt over a white t-shirt and denim shorts. To their right, another child in a bright pink shirt and white pants is running. In the background, other children are visible, and a large stone building with many windows serves as the backdrop. The sky is bright with some clouds. The overall mood is energetic and positive.

**Achieving for Children's
BUSINESS PLAN
2020-24
(2022-23 refresh)**

Achieving **more** for Children

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01

INTRODUCTION

We are delighted to introduce *Achieving more for Children* - our business plan for 2020-24. This is an ambitious plan that builds on our success over our first five years of operating, and explains how we will achieve even more for children and young people so that they have the best start in life and are able to have safe, happy, healthy and successful childhoods.

It sets out the projects that the company will deliver over the next four years to meet these aims. A number of these projects will be delivered across Kingston, Richmond, and Windsor and Maidenhead because they meet a common need. However, some have been designed to meet specific local challenges and circumstances or to reflect the priorities of each individual council. The business plan does not include our day-to-day business and we will of course continue to maintain our attention on providing those early help, education, health and social care services that many families rely on every day.

The programmes in the business plan are based on our conviction that to maintain the quality of our services and achieve the best possible outcomes for children, young people and families within the resources we have available, we must truly focus our work on six important priorities:

- building resilience in families
- creating inclusive local provision to meet increasing need
- investing in a skilled and flexible workforce
- developing our business and delivery models
- implementing smarter and more agile working practices
- striving to deliver excellent value for money in all that we do

Our plan builds on our achievements over the last five years where we have:

- achieved an Ofsted 'Outstanding' judgement for our children's social care support services in Kingston and a 'Good' judgement in Richmond and in Windsor and Maidenhead
- developed our own local residential provision, including supported accommodation for care leavers, short break care for children and young people with disabilities, and a new residential children's home

- secured over £7 million from the Department for Education as part of the Partners in Practice initiative to develop innovative ways of supporting children and young people on the edge of care
- implemented the Signs of Safety model across all our services, which has enabled practitioners to better work in partnership with children and families, building on their family strengths to promote their safety and wellbeing
- become a national leader in the delivery of the Troubled Families programme, with over 650 vulnerable families being given the additional support they need to improve the care and support they provide to their children
- established an independent fostering agency (IFA) across all boroughs which has now been operating effectively for almost two years and has led to an increase in the number of approved fostering households. It is currently looking after 142 children and young people
- achieved 'Good' inspection ratings of our Youth Offending Services in Kingston and Richmond, and Windsor and Maidenhead which demonstrates our high quality support to those young people who are involved in criminal activity

- launched the new Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Register in Kingston and Richmond to capture the details of more children and young people with SEND to encourage greater engagement with families. All those that sign up receive a Disability Awareness Card, which was designed in collaboration with children and parents, and provides proof of a child's disability

In October 2019, Ofsted revisited our SEND services in Windsor and Maidenhead and confirmed that we were making good progress against six of the eight areas identified as requiring improvement.

All three of our owning councils face challenging financial settlements which means that the company must operate within its budget, including the delivery of planned efficiency savings. At the same time, the need for our services is increasing, predominantly in relation to our need to support children and young people with SEND, and to deliver our responsibilities for children in care and those leaving care.

Our business plan must focus on ensuring the company is able to better manage demand, meet needs, deliver required cost savings and achieve longer-term financial sustainability, balanced with a drive to maintain the quality of those services and support innovation and creative solutions to our challenges.

As such, one of our key areas for development will be establishing local placement sufficiency and agreeing a model for the delivery of local placements.

Since the business plan was developed, we have experienced the COVID-19 pandemic which has had a significant impact on our service delivery. This impact is likely to continue for some time and may result in future changes to our priority projects over the coming years. More positively, it has also provided us with many learning opportunities such as the benefits of hybrid working for our workforce, and improved participation of children and young people receiving our support through online engagement.

Our response to the pandemic and the impact on our organisation and the children, young people and families we support is set out in section 4. We have also included a new priority action relating to the whole company that demonstrates the importance we are placing on ensuring we can mitigate the impact of the pandemic as far as is possible.

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ABOUT ACHIEVING FOR CHILDREN

Achieving for Children (AfC) was created as a community interest company in 2014 by the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames and the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames to deliver all their children's services. In 2017, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead became a third owner of the company. We now deliver services to more than 120,000 children and young people. We work closely with our local authority owners and local strategic partners, such as schools, the police, health services and voluntary sector organisations, to ensure that the services we provide are relevant and responsive to the differing needs of children and young people in the three local areas, and support the delivery of each council's local strategic priorities.

Where it makes sense to scale up and deliver services across all three areas, this will be done to achieve better outcomes for children and young people and deliver better value for money. Our initial seven-year contract with Kingston and Richmond councils came to an end in March 2021. We are delighted that the councils have jointly agreed to extend our contract for a further five years until March 2026. We also have a seven-year contract with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead which ends in 2024, with an option to extend for a further five years.

We deliver the full range of children's services for the three councils. Our service offer is based on strong universal provision delivered through our children's centres and youth centres. This is offered alongside targeted early help that provides support to families at the earliest opportunity to prevent children's and young people's needs escalating and facilitate family resilience. We expanded our universal services with the addition of health visiting and school nursing when Windsor and Maidenhead joined the company. These public health services complement our specialist nursing and therapy services for children with disabilities and complex health needs.

Our statutory offer includes child protection, support for children in care and leaving care, youth justice and services for children with special educational needs and disabilities. Our final service area is the support we provide to early years settings and schools to deliver high quality teaching and learning. This includes planning school places, school admissions, advice on school improvement and targeted support for vulnerable pupils. To support the delivery of these services, we employ just over 1,100 professionals from a wide variety of disciplines, including social work, teaching, nursing, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and clinical psychology.

Our performance and the quality of our early help, health and social care services are good and this has been recognised by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission in their service and regulatory inspections. Inspection outcomes for special educational needs services are less positive and are an area for continued improvement.

Service benefits

Achieving for Children has a single organisational focus on services for children, young people and their families. A single organisation working across three local authorities brings operational efficiency and service resilience through a flexible workforce that is skilled and able to manage peaks in demands for services. Our larger scale means that specialist expertise, which may have been lost or unaffordable in a single local authority, can be retained and developed.

The joint company model provides increased opportunities for employee engagement and empowerment, enabling cost-efficient decisions to be taken by practitioners working directly with families and reducing the need for more intensive work and interventions further down the line.

The service benefits for Achieving for Children are best seen in three areas. First, our investment in systemic family therapy to complement social work interventions when working with families with the most complex needs.

Second, our Virtual School where our larger scale has enabled us to retain specialist practitioners focused on improving educational outcomes and destinations for children in care.

Third, the development of a company-wide independent fostering agency to lead on the recruitment and retention of a highly-skilled pool of local foster carers. The agency was graded as 'Good' by Ofsted at its initial regulatory inspection in 2019.

Most of our funding comes from contracts with the local authorities that own us and commission us to deliver their children's services. The annual value of these contracts is £163 million. In addition, the company manages the allocation of over £413 million in Dedicated Schools Grant to early years providers and schools. Since 2015, there has been a significant financial pressure on the high needs block of the Dedicated Schools Grant in Kingston and Richmond due to increasing need and complexity of need and the associated costs of school placements for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

This is a national trend, which is beginning to also become evident in Windsor and Maidenhead in terms of a deficit position. There has similarly been an increase in children in need of social care support and becoming looked after. Again, this follows a national trend and is placing significant financial pressure on the three local authorities. One contributing factor to this increased cost has been a lack of local provision to meet the increasing numbers of children needing support and to meet their complexity of needs, leading to a reliance on external and independent provision which is often at a much higher cost.

Financial benefits

Our company model is designed to be flexible enough to respond to the individual priorities of each of our owning councils, but also to deliver jointly across the two or three partners where this improves outcomes and increases efficiency, resilience and cost effectiveness.

We have a shared support service operating model which delivers efficiencies and resilience from a single approach to business services. This model has reduced central costs by just over £3 million since the company was established.

There have also been financial efficiencies from a more stable workforce and a reduced reliance on more expensive locum and agency workers.

This has been achieved through improved recruitment and retention schemes and the increased opportunities for career development and progression available in a larger organisation.

The pandemic has had a significant impact on workforce stability and so this remains a key area of focus for us, particularly in frontline roles that are proving hard to recruit to.

We have increased our purchasing power for placements for children in care, care leavers and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

We have also invested in developing our own residential provision for children in care and supported accommodation for care leavers to help meet their needs locally at a lower cost. We opened Green Leas, a 17-bed unit offering 24-hours supported accommodation in Kingston in 2017, and opened Hope House, our first children's home, in March 2020.

Overall, we have reduced the costs of delivering services for the councils by £12 million since 2014 and in Windsor and Maidenhead, we are in the lowest 10% of costs per head of the child age population when benchmarked nationally.

One of the reasons Achieving for Children was established as a community interest company was to benefit from increasing our commercial and income generation opportunities whilst maintaining our social focus on giving children the best start and improving their life chances. In our first five years, we have successfully diversified our income by providing a consultancy offer to local authorities which are considering alternative delivery models, or which require support to improve the effectiveness and impact of their children's services.

We have provided in-depth support to eight local authorities in England since 2014 and, as a result of this success, we were named as a Partner in Practice by the Department for Education in 2018 and have successfully provided improvement support to a further five local authorities. We have recently taken on responsibility for the Berkshire-wide Sensory Consortium Service, which includes the management of 40 qualified teachers for visually and hearing impaired children and young people. The service provides sensory impairment support across Windsor and Maidenhead, Slough, Bracknell Forest, Wokingham, Reading and West Berkshire.

Since 2014, we have also generated income from traded services, trusts and foundations, fundraising and corporate partnerships. This has enabled us to innovate our service offer and implement creative solutions to meet families' needs. Over the next four years, we intend to focus our commercial efforts on this activity and reduce our consultancy offer, as this is considered a more sustainable approach for the company.

Commercial benefits and business development

As a community interest company, Achieving for Children is able to trade its services to other local authorities and public bodies, through management consultancy and the provision of services under contract, to create a surplus for reinvestment in frontline services for children, young people and their families.

It also has the potential to expand the range of services provided by the company and to access funding opportunities that are not open to local authorities, such as charitable trusts and foundations and corporate sponsorship, that can be used to fund or supplement funding for non-statutory services.

Since 2014, we have generated £5 million in traded services with schools and from our improvement consultancy offer to 12 local authorities.

We have secured more than £10 million in grant funding to develop our services, including substantial funding from the Department for Education to develop innovative solutions for children experiencing domestic violence, substance misuse and parental mental health issues.

This has resulted in the development of a nationally-recognised service which provides a multi-disciplinary approach to building family resilience to prevent children requiring child protection interventions or needing to come into care.

To make sure we take advantage of opportunities, a business development strategy has been developed to sit alongside this overarching business plan. The Achieving for Children Business Development Strategy outlines the organisation's objective to further develop as a specialist children's services provider and commissioner over the next five years.

It outlines a structured approach to identifying, evaluating and agreeing which opportunities are right for Achieving for Children and our owning councils.

At the heart of the strategy is an ambition to improve the lives of children and young people by providing affordable and outstanding children's services support to the young people of Kingston, Richmond, and Windsor and Maidenhead. Services may be extended to other organisations supporting children outside of our three boroughs where there are clear ethical, financial or developmental benefits.

You can read the strategy on our website: www.achievingforchildren.org.uk/reports

Ofsted rates our children's social care services in Kingston as '**Outstanding**' and as '**Good**' in Richmond and in Windsor and Maidenhead.

91% of families have improved the care they provide to their children following intensive support from the Strengthening Families service. The service has provided support to **265** families experiencing domestic violence, substance misuse and parental mental health concerns.

More than **1,000** children with disabilities receive short break care, including overnight respite care, from Achieving for Children. **96%** of parents and carers rate the care and activities that their children receive as good or better.

More than **10,000** young people each year use our youth services to take part in positive activities that develop their interests and talents. More than **1,500** young people complete their Duke of Edinburgh's award each year delivering over **45,000** hours of volunteering to their local communities with a social value of more than **£475,000**.

Since AfC was created in 2014, we have delivered **9,074** additional school places including expanding SEND provision in mainstream schools and co-developing five new free schools. This means that more of our children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities are now educated within their local communities.

98% of education, health and care plans (EHCPs) are completed within the statutory timescale of 20 weeks from the request for assessment. This places our services among the best in the country for the timeliness of assessments and plans for children with SEND.

We support **165** schools to deliver high quality teaching and learning. **91%** of schools in our three boroughs are judged to be 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted and are at the top of the school league tables for progress and attainment at all key stages.

89% of children and young people report improved mental health and emotional wellbeing following support from our emotional health services. Our services include art therapy, clinical psychology and systemic family therapy.

More than **13,000** families attend one of our children's centres each year for health appointments, to access local childcare, and to attend activities that help their children get ready for school. **77%** of children achieve a good level of development in their first year at school which is well above the national average at **72%**.

03

OUR VISION AND VALUES

Our vision

Our vision is to provide children and their families with the support and services they need to live safe, happy, healthy and successful lives.

Our values

Trust:

We are reliable, others can count on us to undertake tasks and deliver on what was agreed – we will do what we said we would do. We will encourage open and honest communication, and model clear and fair professional boundaries.

Respect:

We will listen to and value other people's perspectives and differences. We will show empathy and humility in the way we communicate.

Empower:

We help others to realise their ability and potential, and show emotional intelligence in our approach. We show appropriate and respectful use of the power given to us in our jobs or positions and we use this to encourage and enable others.

Who we are

At Achieving for Children, we champion children and families, putting their wellbeing and education first. As a social enterprise, we take the values of public service and combine them with a business approach to deliver our social aims. We have the independence and flexibility to tailor innovative solutions to the needs of children and their families, whilst maintaining our focus on delivering priorities for each of the councils that owns the company.

How we work

We put children and young people first:

We are passionate about ensuring the best possible outcomes for children and young people and this drives everything that we do.

We embrace diversity and champion inclusion:

We are committed to valuing difference and diversity in our workforce and in the children and families we work with, so that their identities are promoted and their individual needs are met.

We are resourceful, adaptable and dependable:

We find and create solutions that work well for children and their families. We build our reputation based on our professionalism, our dedication, our flexibility, and by always delivering what we promise.

We nurture strong, responsive and caring relationships:

We build strong and productive partnerships with children, young people, parents, carers and communities so that we can listen and learn from one another.

We lead and support partnerships to meet the needs of children and families:

We build strong and effective partnerships with our owning councils, other statutory services, schools, education providers, local businesses, as well as organisations in the voluntary and community sector.

We value and invest in our staff to deliver innovative and quality services:

We know that our employees are our most important asset – they make our ambitions a reality. We recruit and retain the best people, value their experience and expertise, and support their professional development and personal growth.

We will work with our own councils to deliver the most effective solutions for them:

We understand the requirements of each council that commissions us to deliver their children's services, and work closely with elected members and corporate leaders to help deliver their plans and priorities.



04

OUR BUSINESS PLAN

What is the business plan?

Achieving *more* for Children - the business plan for Achieving for Children for 2020-24 is the company's most important strategic document. It articulates our vision for the company together with the most important outcomes that we want to achieve for children in partnership with our owning councils and local strategic partners. It also sets out our objectives for what we want the company to be and how we will change and develop in order to deliver these outcomes. Against each of our strategic outcomes, the business plan sets out priority activities that we will focus on delivering over the next four years. These are the key priorities that will enable us to deliver our vision. Each priority includes targets and milestones so that the three councils, our partners, stakeholders, young people and families can hold us to account. The intention of our business plan is not to capture everything we do as a company. It is a high-level strategic document which provides a clear framework for decision-making about our services and how we prioritise and allocate our resources.

How we have developed our business plan

The priorities in our business plan are based on a sound understanding of the local needs in each of the three local authority areas. We have developed a strong evidence base for our plan using demographic trends, performance data and the needs analyses produced by the councils in their joint strategic needs assessments to better understand local needs, alongside more qualitative feedback about the effectiveness and impact of our services.

To make sense of all of this information, we held a Big Conversation in 2019. This involved a series of listening events with children, young people, parents, carers, partner organisations in the statutory and voluntary sectors, the councils and our own employees. These conversations enabled us to hear about those issues that are most pressing and that should be our highest priority, as well as identifying creative solutions and potential areas for innovation. The Big Conversation also enabled us to make sure that our plan is aligned with the strategic priorities of our owning councils in their corporate plans and with our strategic partners, including the local health and care plans developed by the clinical commissioning groups.

How we will measure our progress

We will monitor progress in two ways. Firstly, by being clear about our priority activities, when we expect these to be delivered and monitoring our progress against those delivery plans. We report on progress with the implementation of our business plan through our quarterly project and financial monitoring which goes to the AfC Board and senior leaders across the organisation. We also produce an annual report and impact report each year which set out our key achievements over the previous 12 months.

Secondly, we monitor progress through a set of key performance indicators and quality measures that are reported as part of our contractual arrangements. These have been set by the councils as part of our contracts with them and by our board of directors to ensure the continual development of the company and the services it delivers. There is regular monitoring and scrutiny of our performance by the councils and the board of directors, with progress against the key performance indicators reported publicly to each of the owning councils. All the success measures that we have used in this plan are reported to the councils and published as part of our quarterly contract monitoring.

Annual review

Each year the business plan priority areas will be reviewed and updated. The annual review will be reported to the councils in public meetings. The annual review will provide a self-assessment of our progress at implementing our priorities in the previous year, as well as refreshing our priorities and activities for the year ahead.

For 2022-23, as part of the refresh of the business plan, we have reviewed our priority projects. We have new priority projects across our whole organisation relating to our equality and diversity and our environment strategy, and in relation to leaving care in Kingston and Richmond. We have also amended and combined a number of other projects including those relating to our practice framework, residential care provision, business development activity, and transitions for young people in care and young people with SEND.

In addition, a number of projects have now been removed from the business plan. These are set out below.

Strategic priority	Priority project	Why is this no longer included in the plan?
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Achieving more for children across our whole organisation		
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<p>Positive futures</p>	<p>Expand vocational learning opportunities for young people through the development of work experience, traineeships and apprenticeships (particularly for those leaving care or with SEND) to support them to gain meaningful employment.</p>	<p>This project is now considered to be business as usual. Apprentices continue to be fully supported, face-to-face when possible, but also through virtual learning platforms and remote teaching mechanisms including our e-learning platform. Several schools across our operational areas are supporting apprentices to complete qualifications in teaching, early years and business administration. New apprenticeship opportunities are developing with more and more local employers wishing to recruit. Progression rates remain very good for existing apprentices, with over 80% of employers offering advanced apprenticeships or permanent employment opportunities for their existing apprentices. The initiatives we offer include the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KickStart: we are officially a partner in the government’s KickStart scheme which involves fully funding and supporting 16 to 24 year olds to complete six months of paid work to gain valuable work skills, knowledge and experience. We have offered a number of our internal KickStart roles to care leavers and our SEND young people with EHCPs. • Positive Directions: aimed at 16 to 24 year olds not in education, employment and training and includes a bespoke training offer to help develop skills. 43 young people have started the programme, with 19 progressing into further education or training, apprenticeship or employment. • Head2Work: social action group work experience and interview preparation in partnership with local employers, aimed at 18 to 24 year olds who are seeking work. In the last 12 months, 19 young people have accessed the programme, and of these, two have progressed into employment or training and a further six have job offers. • Youth Employment Skills: aimed at young people who have social, emotional or mental health needs aged 16 to 24. It consists of one-to-one mentoring and support along with small group or one-to-one workshops focussing on employability and character traits. This programme started in May 2021 and we have 28 spaces on the programme over two years. • Able2: this programme is similar to the Youth Employment Skills, but aimed at young people with long term health needs and physical disabilities. This programme started in June 2021.
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Strategic priority	Priority project	Why is this no longer included in the plan?
Achieving more for children across our whole organisation		
Positive futures (continued)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traineeships: in terms of local traineeship provision, Brentford FC Community Sports Club are now offering a traineeship. The latest cohort started on 21 June 2021 and they plan to run them throughout the next academic year. Harlequins Rugby Club is also currently recruiting for trainees for their traineeship programme. Both opportunities are not just aimed at young people interested in sport - they include a range of work placement opportunities in different sectors. We have also recently shared external offers for digital marketing and a sports-related traineeship and have a young person due to start a riding stables traineeship in Richmond Park shortly. • Internship: at our invitation, Mencap recently established a supported internship specifically aimed at young people with EHCPs as an alternative to traineeships for those who need a more supportive offer. • We have offered a number of supported internships to young people in Windsor and Maidenhead via local colleges including Reading College, Langley College and the Berkshire College of Agriculture. • The supported employment service in Windsor and Maidenhead, which is available to our young people, is delivered by Optalis. This includes self-referral via their website and a free first consultation, with additional support provided at a cost based on a threshold to ensure those most in need can access the service.
Excellent workforce	Develop the organisational culture of the company, including redefining and embedding values, behaviours and ways of working that are focused on achieving the best possible support and services for children and young people.	<p>Our most recent staff survey indicated that our workforce considers Achieving for Children to be a good employer, with a strong and positive organisational culture.</p> <p>Our values - Empower, Trust and Respect - are now well embedded across the organisation, with 79% of staff reporting in our annual survey that they can see how the values are demonstrated by others in their team.</p> <p>As such, this project is considered completed, with the focus turning to improving our inclusiveness and diversity across Achieving for Children. This is reflected in a new priority project in the business plan.</p>

Strategic priority	Priority project	Why is this no longer included in the plan?
Achieving more for children across our whole organisation		
Positive futures	<p>Develop a high quality, in-borough alternative education provision for children and young people who find it difficult to access mainstream education to enable them to reach their potential in the education environment most suited to their needs.</p>	<p>This activity is now considered business as usual. There is no longer an intention to create a specific borough-based alternative education provision in Richmond. Instead, we will be buying back places from Malden Oaks Pupil Referral Unit for secondary pupils, which enables us to effectively meet demand. This mirrors the arrangement we have in Windsor and Maidenhead with Haybrook College in Slough.</p> <p>In addition, we are developing alternative key stage 3 and key stage 4 provision for vocational pathways in the next academic year. We are considering venues on the borough boundary as the location. If this is successful, we would move primary alternative education provision to this site as well.</p> <p>This activity will enable us to support those children and young people who find it difficult to access mainstream education by providing a safe, supportive and stimulating environment where they are encouraged to have high expectations and to take responsibility for their learning and their school community.</p>

COVID-19

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has had, and continues to have, an impact on our business plan. The pandemic has provided the opportunity to develop new ways of delivering our services, for example, through the increased use of digital solutions. As part of our recovery planning, we will be reviewing the lessons learnt and will apply best practice to our service delivery models so we can continue to effectively meet the needs of our children, young people and families in an affordable way. Some projects set out in this plan have been delayed or may no longer be necessary because our response to COVID-19 has required a major programme of work, and resources have been diverted to support the continuation of services and the wellbeing of Achieving for Children staff and service users..

Our commitment to equality and diversity

Within Achieving for Children, we have recognised the need to strengthen our equality and diversity practice and better understand our workforce and the issues that impact them. To support this, we have established the staff-led Equality and Diversity Board which includes senior managers and staff from across the organisation. The board's purpose is to drive our equality and diversity change agenda, in line with our organisational values. Its aim is to support staff to understand differences and behave respectfully to each other so that people want to work and stay working in the company and that Achieving for Children can respond to the different needs of service users. The board will help implement our equality and diversity action plan which aims to promote, improve and sustain equality, diversity and inclusion across the organisation. The plan was developed based on responses to our equality and diversity staff survey. We will continue to seek the views of staff and provide a range of engagement mechanisms to ensure we hear their voice and learn from their experiences. For example, we are in the process of developing employee resource groups, which will be established to represent different characteristic groups from across Achieving for Children.

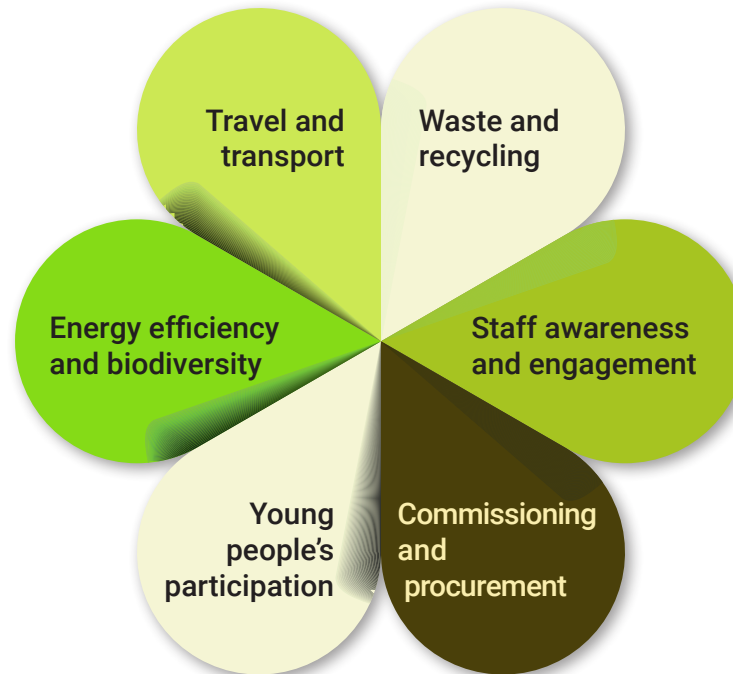
Along with colleagues in Richmond and Wandsworth, we are also part of the Workforce Race Equality Standard pilot, which is based on a successful programme implemented in the NHS to improve the experiences of staff from minoritised ethnic groups. The pilot aims to collate data on staff from ethnic minority backgrounds in relation to areas such as recruitment, training, promotion, and turnover, and use this to create an action plan to address any issues identified. The project is aligned to the work of the Equality and Diversity Board and will be overseen by Equality and Diversity Board members.

We have included a new priority project in the business plan in relation to equality and diversity for this upcoming year.

Our commitment to the environment

As an organisation we are committed to taking proactive steps to minimise the environmental impact of our activities. This year we have developed our first environment strategy, which sets out this commitment. We will seek to deliver children's services in an environmentally-friendly way, through identifying areas of change which will result in fewer carbon emissions. We will work with Kingston, Richmond, and Windsor and Maidenhead councils to contribute to our boroughs' efforts in creating a sustainable and biodiverse environment.

We have identified six key areas where we can focus on having an impact.



Alongside the environment strategy, we have developed an action plan which will support our aims in reducing our carbon footprint and take forward the key priorities identified under each theme. The action plan is overseen by an environment taskforce, coordinated by the Strategy, Policy and Programmes team. Where possible, it will capture how impact will be measured.

The action plan is presented to the Achieving for Children Board of Directors twice a year and is regularly scrutinised by the Kingston and Richmond, and Windsor and Maidenhead youth councils.

We have included a new priority project in the business plan in relation to our environment strategy for this upcoming year.

The strategy itself can be found here: <https://kr.afcinfo.org.uk/pages/about-us/reports-and-documents/environment-strategy>

05

OUR AMBITION

By 2024, Achieving for Children will be a strong and financially stable organisation. Children's services throughout England are facing unprecedented financial challenges, predominantly because of the need to support more children and an increase in the complexity and longevity of their needs. This relates to services for children in need of help and protection, children in care and leaving care, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, and children with special educational needs and disabilities. It is placing significant pressure on the three councils' revenue budgets and, in the case of support for children with special educational needs and disabilities in Kingston and Richmond, is building a substantial in-year and cumulative financial deficit because the allocated government grant is insufficient to meet the increasing need.

We will meet this challenge by having a relentless focus on outcomes for children and young people based on local needs and priorities. Delivering our vision to give children the best start in life and improve their life chances is not just a job for Achieving for Children, but is a shared responsibility with the wider public and voluntary sector.

By 2024, Achieving for Children will be characterised by its strong and meaningful relationships with our partner organisations and our whole-system approach to improving services and outcomes for children and young people. We will have strengthened relationships with parents and carers, and our service offer will be shaped by them and by the direct involvement of children and young people.

The co-production of effective solutions to local priorities, including the financial challenges, will be evident in our successful delivery of this business plan, as well as our response to emerging issues. We will have invested in integrated services and joint commissioning with our partners, bringing together our collective ideas, talent and resources to better meet the needs of children and young people, especially those with the most complex needs. This will most be evident in our delivery of children's health services where we will have strengthened our integrated health services for children with disabilities, and we will have expanded our offer to include health visiting and public health nursing in schools.

We will focus our early help services on building resilience in families so that they are better able to help, support and protect their children without the need for statutory interventions. Our services will consistently use reflective, collaborative and strengths-based approaches to working with the whole family so that parents are able to make positive and lasting changes to the care they provide to their children. This means maintaining strong universal services, such as youth services, and investing in targeted early help services based on evidence-based interventions that are proven to work in supporting sustained change in families.

We aim to have consistently good quality services that support children and young people to live safe, happy, healthy and successful lives. By 2024, our social care services will be judged to be 'Good' quality by Ofsted in their inspection of local authority children's services or the subsequent inspection framework. Local area inspections of services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and for youth justice services will also have positive outcomes, as will inspections of our health services by the Care Quality Commission.

We will have clear action plans in place to address any 'written statement of action' in relation to our special education needs or disabilities services and will be able to demonstrate progress implementing these actions. Most importantly, satisfaction with our services of children, young people and parents will also be high. We will consistently get the basics right for families in terms of good quality assessments, plans, interventions and support packages that are regularly reviewed, and use evidence of what works coupled with effective risk management that support children and young people to remain at home with their families as much as possible.

By 2024, we will have successfully invested in local provision so that children and young people can stay closer to their families and support networks, and benefit from our local offer of integrated education, health and care services. We will have met the increasing demand for school places and have maintained local choice for children and young people by working with the government to create more free schools and by having permanently expanded 'Good' and 'Outstanding' local schools.

We will have invested in inclusive education so that more children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities can be educated in local mainstream schools. We will have also opened more local special schools with a specific focus on autistic spectrum conditions, speech, language and communication needs, and social, emotional and mental health needs. In the next four years, we will also have increased the number of foster care families, opened our own residential children's homes and increased our range of supported accommodation for care leavers. We will have joined-up this support to provide holistic support to children in care and on the edge of care. All our services will be focused on promoting independence and developing the skills that young people will need in adulthood.

Achieving our vision for children and young people is reliant on a skilled, motivated and stable workforce. So, by 2024, we will be recognised as an employer of choice for professionals working with children and young people. We will have reduced the number of vacant posts and agency workers in our organisation, reduced our annual voluntary turnover, and increased our employee satisfaction rates to above 90%. Our frontline employees will be able to spend the large majority of their time working directly with children and families because we have lean, streamlined business processes and have invested in new technology and digital solutions that enable more agile and smarter working.

This will include bringing in-house those support services that will enable us to provide better and more cost-efficient services for children and their families. We will have strengthened our commissioning practices to foster innovation and achieve higher quality services at a lower cost and will have a well established sufficiency model that supports local and good quality care and support for young people in all three of our boroughs. We will remain open to opportunities to bring onboard a partner local authority to work alongside our services in Windsor and Maidenhead.

06

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES TO 2024

Based on our vision and ambitions, we have identified six strategic priorities for our business plan for the next four years

Strategic priority	What we will achieve for children and young people?	Why is this important?
Stronger families	We will have a relentless focus on safeguarding children and young people across all our services. The services we deliver will be high quality and will protect and promote the wellbeing of children and young people by promoting family resilience. We will work collaboratively with our key partners to ensure we are able to realise the benefits of joint working to support our children, young people and families.	Ensuring children and young people are safe from harm is our core business. We want to build resilience in our families and communities so that they are better able to help, support and protect children without the need for statutory intervention. As part of this we want to ensure our relationships with key partners are strong and that our families really benefit from collaboration and joined-up working.
Positive futures	We will invest and work collaboratively to improve our local education, health and care offer to children and young people so that they have access to high quality services, are able to stay close to their families and friends, achieve well, and develop their skills for independence.	It is crucial that we provide the right support at the right time. This will enable us to help children and young people to develop their independence and prepare for adulthood. Putting in place local provision means children and young people can stay close to their families and essential support networks and they can benefit from our integrated services giving them the best chance for a positive future.

Strategic priority	What we will achieve for children and young people?	Why is this important?
Excellent workforce	Our workforce will be experienced, talented, empowered and motivated to deliver the best possible services and outcomes for children and young people. We will invest in the recruitment, retention and development of our workforce and reward their achievements.	Feedback from children, young people and families always emphasises the importance of a consistent, skilled and motivated workforce. We want to make Achieving for Children a place where people want to come and work and a company that they are proud to tell their family and friends that they work for.
Financial stability	The services we deliver will provide excellent value for money and we are trusted by our commissioning councils to deliver the best possible services within the agreed contract price, including the efficient delivery of our financial savings plans.	Given the financial context, both nationally and locally, it is essential that we are focused on delivering efficient, cost-effective and financially sustainable services so we are able to support those most in need.
Successful organisation	We will secure the sustainability of the community interest company through contract renewal, business development, fundraising and good growth, so that we are able to reinvest in the services we deliver directly to children and their families.	Greater commercial success will enable us to generate a profit to reinvest in our services thereby benefiting the children and young people that we support.
Smarter working	Our business processes will be efficient, cost-effective and supportive to frontline practitioners so that they are able to spend as much time as possible working directly with children, young people and their families to improve outcomes for them.	Better business processes, and effective use of new digital technologies, will allow our workforce to reduce the amount of time they spend on unnecessary paperwork and bureaucracy, freeing them up to spend more time with the children, young people and families we support.

07

DELIVERING OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES IN 2022-23

Achieving *more* for children across our whole organisation

Strategic priority	Priority project	Lead	How will know we have been successful in 2024?	What will we achieve by March 2023?
Stronger families	Ensure Achieving for Children is able to effectively respond to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic by continuing to keep our children and young people safe, ensuring our families feel supported, and helping our staff to adapt to new working arrangements.	Chief Operating and Finance Officer	<p>The disruption to our services caused by COVID-19 will have been minimised by adopting a flexible and pragmatic approach to service delivery. Children, young people and families will have continued to receive high quality services, either face-to-face or virtually, and our staff will have felt supported throughout the pandemic.</p> <p>Our accommodation strategy will reflect new ways of working implemented during COVID-19, with a stronger focus on home working. There will be a strong understanding of the long-term impacts of the pandemic on our children, young people and families.</p>	Service delivery will have returned to normal, with best practice identified during COVID-19 implemented such as communicating with children in care virtually. A new approach to working arrangements will be in place which recognises the potential for greater home working. There will be a better understanding of the immediate impact of COVID-19 on the services we deliver to children, young people and families.

Strategic priority	Priority project	Lead	How will know we have been successful in 2024?	What will we achieve by March 2023?
Positive futures	Through the implementation of our sufficiency strategy, continue to increase the capacity of residential support for children and young people in care and of supported accommodation for young people leaving care, either as a provider or a commissioner, so that more young people are able to stay local and closer to their support networks. This will include providing additional placement capacity to the market with any income generated reinvested into local services for children in care and on the edge of care.	Associate Director for Provider Services	<p>90% of children and young people will be living locally in high quality care placements close to their friends and family and will be effectively support to full independence and adulthood.</p> <p>Any additional placement capacity is provided to the market with income generated from the commercial strategy for residential care reinvested each year into local services for children in care and on the edge of care.</p>	<p>We will have agreed a delivery model with our owning councils that increases the amount of local accomodation and will have a clear roadmap that shows what provision will open when in each of our boroughs.</p> <p>We will have supported the development of at least one new residential children’s home and two new supported accommodation units for care leavers leading to 60% of children in care and young people leaving care being in local care placements.</p>
	Strengthen compliance and the quality of services delivered by the independent fostering agency (IFA) , so that it supports the recruitment, training, development and retention of foster carers, enables more children and young people to benefit from in-house family-based care.	Associate Director for Provider Services	Our IFA will be judged as ‘Good’ by Ofsted. We will have increased our number of foster carers by 100 families so that more children and young people are able to benefit from family-based care.	Our IFA will be judged ‘Good’ by Ofsted. We will have increased our total number of foster carers by 25 families.

Strategic priority	Priority project	Lead	How will know we have been successful in 2024?	What will we achieve by March 2023?
Excellent workforce	Strengthen the approach to recruitment and retention to attract experienced and well-qualified practitioners and managers, retain a permanent workforce, and reduce employee turnover and reliance on a higher-cost agency workforce.	Associate Director for Workforce	We will have a strong and stable workforce with a voluntary turnover rate below 15% and an agency staff rate below 10% . There will be clear career development pathways with more than 75% of our employees saying that Achieving for Children is a good place to work.	Our voluntary turnover rate will be 18% and our agency staff rate will be 16% . 60% of our employees say that Achieving for Children is a good place to work.
	Ensuring Achieving for Children is an inclusive and diverse organisation that celebrates differences and that represents the local communities it serves.	Equality and Diversity Board	The workforce will be more reflective of the local community that it services, with established staff equality groups that work alongside the Equality and Diversity Board to ensure that Achieving for Children is known for embracing diversity and championing inclusion for our workforce and the children and families that we work with, so that their identities are promoted and their individual needs are met.	We will have implemented the majority of actions in the 2022/23 Equality and Diversity Board, including taking part in the Workforce Race Equality Standard and supporting the development of staff equality groups
Financial stability	Review and strengthen capacity and arrangements for commissioning, procurement and contract management , including the joint commissioning of services with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), to achieve quality, value and improved outcomes for children, young people and their families.	Associate Director of Business Development and Strategic Commissioning	We will have a robust and comprehensive commissioning arrangements including effective joint commissioning with the CCG. Procurement and contract management has been strengthened across the organisation. Placement commissioning is a strength for AfC, embedded into our company culture and supports cost efficient and high quality services and support.	A new commissioning framework has been agreed with a focus on joint commissioning, supported by a skilled commissioning team. The workforce is upskilled in commissioning and procurement practice and the policy framework for this area is reviewed and strengthened.

Strategic priority	Priority project	Lead	How will know we have been successful in 2024?	What will we achieve by March 2023?
Successful organisation	Develop and implement a more formalised approach to business development through a new Business Development Strategy and Business Development Plan. This will include the development and implementation of a revised fundraising strategy that brings in grants and other income to support the delivery of innovative new services that promote positive outcomes for the most vulnerable children and young people.	Associate Director of Business Development and Strategic Commissioning	<p>The business development strategy will be established and we will have successfully put programmes in place to improve impact on children and young people, reduce average cost, generate income and improve national reputation.</p> <p>The company generates £1 million annually through fundraising for investment in prevention and early intervention activities for the most vulnerable children and young people.</p>	<p>We have a clear process for approving business cases for priority business development areas with well established mechanisms for assessing viability of proposals. Construction is underway for a number of sufficiency programmes and we have successfully implemented our fostering strategy.</p> <p>The company generates £250,000 through fundraising for investment in prevention and early intervention activities for the most vulnerable children and young people.</p>
	Take opportunities to expand the company, should they present themselves , by finding a children's services partner for Windsor and Maidenhead that would enable service effectiveness, operational efficiency and resilience, and longer-term financial sustainability. Any expansion will be subject to decision by the owning councils.	Director of Children's Services, RBWM	If suitable opportunities have arisen, there will be an integrated delivery model in Windsor and Maidenhead with services delivered in partnership with another local authority, delivering financial and operational efficiencies for both partners.	Potential opportunities have been identified and reviewed, with exploratory discussions to ascertain their interest in exploring an integrated delivery model with services in Windsor and Maidenhead.

Strategic priority	Priority project	Lead	How will know we have been successful in 2024?	What will we achieve by March 2023?
Smarter working	Review and put in place strengthened arrangements for corporate support services so that the company has the services it needs to be efficient, effective and deliver excellent value for money, with an immediate focus on bringing HR in house.	Chief Operating and Finance Officer	The company benefits from effective and cost-efficient corporate support services. Employee satisfaction rates with support services are high because 98% of issues and incidents are successfully resolved within agreed timescales.	The service level agreements for IT have been reviewed with changes made to strengthen these support services. HR services have been successfully brought in-house, delivering £150,000 in efficiency savings.
	Implement digital strategies and solutions to improve the operational efficiency of frontline and corporate support services, maximising the time available to practitioners for working directly with children and young people.	Associate Director for Business Efficiency and Digital Transformation	Achieving for Children is a lean and efficient organisation; 100% of routine tasks, such as booking appointments, have been digitised.	The digital transformation strategy has been implemented leading to the digitisation of at least 60% of routine business support tasks.
	Develop and implement an Achieving for Children Environment Strategy that sets out our commitment to taking proactive steps to minimise the environmental impact of our activities, which will enable us to support our owning councils in their efforts to address the climate change emergency.	Chief Operating and Finance Officer	Having identified areas of change within Achieving for Children which will result in fewer carbon emissions, we will be able to demonstrate our environmental impact and will have contributed to a reduction of carbon emissions for our owning councils.	The environment task force will be established and will have led on the implementation of the actions in our environment strategy action plan for 2022/23

Achieving *more* for children in Kingston

Strategic priority	Priority project	Lead	How will know we have been successful in 2024?	What will we achieve by March 2023?
Stronger families	Embed the strengthened approach to the quality assurance of frontline services so that they continue to effectively safeguard children and young people and promote their wellbeing and achievement. This will include strengthening the multi-agency focus on quality assuring EHCPs for children and young people with SEND.	Associate Director for Quality Assurance and Review	Quality assurance practice informs the continual development of our services so that they are relevant and responsive to changing local needs. 90% of casework is judged to be good or better as part of our quality assurance of practice in early help, children’s social care, health services and support for children with SEND. Quality assurance processes identify that the education, health and social care contributions to the plans for children with SEND are completed within statutory timescales and to a high standard. Positive feedback from parents, children and young people reflects this multi-agency approach.	Permanent appointments have been made to increase capacity for quality assurance in both operational areas. A revised quality assurance framework is in place following feedback from recent inspections. 75% of casework is judged to be ‘Good’ or better. The strengthened multi-agency focus on EHCPs results in an improvement in the quality as evidenced through audits.
	Further embed the Families First practice framework for early help and children’s social care services, including adopting positive changes implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as digital visits and direct work with children, that will enable us to better support families to make sustainable change and reduce risks to children and young people.	Director of Children’s Services	The Families First practice framework will be established across all our services. External reviews and inspections of our services will consistently demonstrate the success of our practice in promoting resilience in families so that children are safe and well cared for. Ofsted will judge our children’s services to be outstanding in their overall effectiveness.	The Families First practice framework will be in place and implemented across all services. Internal reviews of practice will evidence that Signs of Safety and systemic approaches are embedded. Ofsted will judge our services to be at least good or outstanding.

Strategic priority	Priority project	Lead	How will know we have been successful in 2024?	What will we achieve by March 2023?
Stronger families	Through the continued implementation of the early help strategy and partnership offer, further strengthen the early help resilience networks with a focus on developing a partnership and community-led approach to early help that supports and strengthens families at the earliest opportunity, so that they can protect and meet the needs of their children without the need for higher-tier services or social work intervention.	Associate Director for Early Help	We have a strong partnership-focused early help offer that provides coherent and coordinated support to families from the right service at the earliest opportunity, led by the early help resilience networks. Universal services and targeted early help services are effective at reducing the need for statutory interventions, meaning that there has been a 20% reduction in child protection planning and the number of children coming into care.	The early help resilience networks are operating effectively with strong attendance from across partner agencies and, as a result, there has been an increase in partnership-led early help assessments. The networks are also supporting the creation of new practice and partnership innovation including the development of targeted youth work responses for adolescents and the enhancement of community led responses to contextual safeguarding. There has been a 5% reduction in child protection planning and the number of children in care.
Positive futures	Review and reconfigure the Leaving Care Service to ensure the offer to young people leaving care remains high quality and effectively meets their needs, while the service is well positioned to manage any potential increased demand.	Director of Children's Social Care	100% of recommendations from the leaving care review have been implemented, with the newly configured service in place and delivering an excellent offer to young people leaving care that supports them to prepare for adulthood and the transition to independence.	The initial review is complete and work is underway to implement the recommendations, with 25% successfully complete.

Strategic priority	Priority project	Lead	How will know we have been successful in 2024?	What will we achieve by March 2023?
Positive futures (continued)	Review and reconfigure the future delivery of health services , establishing an operating model that promotes high quality and integrated services that support children and young people to maximise their independence, resilience and health outcomes.	Associate Director for Health Services	Public health nursing services are integrated with other children's services providing effective universal child health services and improved support for children and young people with more complex health and wellbeing needs, thereby reducing the need for more intensive interventions such as education, health and care planning.	Work is underway to develop a 'first 1,000 days' service, which would bring together public sector and voluntary sector organisations to improve outcomes of young children aged 0 to 3 and reduce the longer-term need for statutory services and support.
	Using the safety valve funding, and through the delivery of the SEND Futures Plan and the implementation of the written statement of action , transform the experience of children and young people with SEND and their families, so that local, high-quality education, health and social care provision meets needs and promotes independence for all children and young people with SEND, whilst also delivering good value for money.	SEND Programme Director	<p>The needs of most children and young people with SEND are met at the earliest stage in mainstream schools without the need for an EHCP.</p> <p>75% of children and young people with a plan are educated in local mainstream and special schools with much reduced reliance on independent and non-maintained school provision outside of the borough. The educational needs of children and young people with SEND are met within the funding provided in the Dedicated Schools Grant.</p> <p>Services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities are consistently high quality with 75% of parents and carers rating services as good or better.</p>	There are fewer than 1,275 EHCPs. 60% of children and young people with a plan are educated in local mainstream and special schools. The plan leads to cost avoidance and mitigations of £2.5m per plan year. The re-inspection of local area SEND services by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission judges that sufficient progress has been made in implementing the written statement of action and that the overall quality of services has improved. 60% of parents and carers rate services as good or better.

Strategic priority	Priority project	Lead	How will know we have been successful in 2024?	What will we achieve by March 2023?
Positive futures (continued)	Improve the provision of occupational therapy, speech and language therapy , and physiotherapy through the implementation of recommendations identified in the review of therapies across Achieving for Children, the CCG and key partners.	Associate Director for SEND	There is an enhanced local therapies offer which is more accessible and more responsive to growing demand. 75% of parents and carers rate therapies as 'Good' or better. The revised staffing model impacts positively on the recruitment and retention of therapists and develops wider expertise across the whole SEND workforce.	25% of recommendations identified in the therapies review are implemented.
	Work with adult care and housing providers to improve pathway and transition planning for young people with SEND so that services and support are in place to meet their needs, promote independence and enable a positive experience of early adulthood.	Associate Director for SEND	All young people with SEND have an effective transition plan in place by age 15 that plans for their independence and maximises their opportunities for a positive experience of early adulthood, including planning for their transition to adult social care services where needed.	A revised transitions protocol has been agreed between Achieving for Children and adult social care services and is embedded across SEND and leaving care services.
	Develop and implement a mental health strategy that outlines responsibilities for Achieving for Children, CCG and partner organisations, with clear pathways and thresholds that are easily understood by families and that effectively meet the mental health needs of children and young people in universal and more targeted provision.	Associate Director for Emotional Health	Children and young people are easily able to access high quality mental health services that have a strong focus on early intervention and prevent issues escalating to higher levels of need. 75% of families will rate mental health services as good or better.	The review of current mental health provision at the universal level and tier 2 and tier 3 is complete with a clear action plan in place for implementing identified recommendations.

The priorities in our plan for Kingston are aligned with the Corporate Plan for 2019/23: Making Kingston better, together - in particular strategic outcome 3: Healthy, independent and resilient residents, with effective support to those who need it most.

Achieving *more* for children in Richmond

Strategic priority	Priority project	Lead	How will know we have been successful in 2024?	What will we achieve by March 2023?
Stronger families	Embed the strengthened approach to the quality assurance of frontline services so that they continue to effectively safeguard children and young people and promote their wellbeing and achievement. This will include strengthening the multi-agency focus on quality assuring EHCPs for children and young people with SEND.	Associate Director for Quality Assurance and Review	Quality assurance practice informs the continual development of our services so that they are relevant and responsive to changing local needs. 90% of casework is judged to be good or better as part of our quality assurance of practice in early help, children’s social care, health services and support for children with SEND. Quality assurance processes identify that the education, health and social care contributions to the plans for children with SEND are completed within statutory timescales and to a high standard. Positive feedback from parents, children and young people reflects this multi-agency approach.	Permanent appointments have been made to increase capacity for quality assurance in both operational areas. A revised quality assurance framework is in place following feedback from recent inspections. 75% of casework is judged to be ‘Good’ or better. The strengthened multi-agency focus on EHCPs results in an improvement in the quality as evidenced through audits.
	Further embed the Families First practice framework for early help and children’s social care services, including adopting positive changes implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as digital visits and direct work with children, that will enable us to better support families to make sustainable change and reduce risks to children and young people.	Director of Children’s Services	The Families First practice framework will be established across all our services. External reviews and inspections of our services will consistently demonstrate the success of our practice in promoting resilience in families so that children are safe and well cared for. Ofsted will judge our children’s services to be ‘Outstanding’ in their overall effectiveness.	The Families First practice framework will be in place and implemented across all services. Internal reviews of practice will evidence that Signs of Safety and systemic approaches are embedded. Ofsted will judge our services to be at least ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’.

Strategic priority	Priority project	Lead	How will know we have been successful in 2024?	What will we achieve by March 2023?
Stronger families	Through the continued implementation of the Early Help Strategy and partnership offer, further strengthen the early help resilience networks with a focus on developing a partnership and community-led approach to early help that supports and strengthens families at the earliest opportunity, so that they can protect and meet the needs of their children without the need for higher-tier services or social work intervention.	Associate Director for Early Help	We have a strong partnership-focused early help offer that provides coherent and coordinated support to families from the right service at the earliest opportunity, led by the early help resilience networks. Universal services and targeted early help services are effective at reducing the need for statutory interventions meaning that there has been a 20% reduction in child protection planning and the number of children coming into care.	The early help resilience networks are operating effectively with strong attendance from across partner agencies and, as a result, there has been an increase in partnership led early help assessments. The networks are also supporting the creation of new practice and partnership innovation including the development of targeted youth work responses for adolescents and the enhancement of community led responses to contextual safeguarding. There has been a 5% reduction in child protection planning and the number of children in care.
Positive futures	Review and reconfigure the Leaving Care Service to ensure the offer to young people leaving care remains high quality and effectively meets their needs, while the service is well positioned to manage any potential increased demand.	Associate Director for Permanency	100% of recommendations from the leaving care review have been implemented, with the newly configured service in place and delivering an excellent offer to young people leaving care that supports them to prepare for adulthood and the transition to independence.	The initial review is complete and work is underway to implement the recommendations, with 25% successfully complete.

Strategic priority	Priority project	Lead	How will know we have been successful in 2024?	What will we achieve by March 2023?
Positive futures (continued)	Review and reconfigure the future delivery of health services in line with the development of the new integrated care services. This will include establishing an operating model that promotes high quality and integrated services to support children and young people to maximise their independence, resilience and health outcomes, and reviewing our health staff offer to support a permanent and stable workforce.	Associate Director for Health Services	Public health nursing services are integrated with other children's services, providing effective universal child health services and improved support for children and young people with more complex health and wellbeing needs, thereby reducing the need for more intensive interventions such as education, health and care planning.	Work is underway to develop a 'first 1000 days' service, which would bring together public sector and voluntary sector organisations to improve outcomes of young children aged 0 to 3 and reduce the longer-term need for statutory services and support.
	Using the safety valve funding, and through the delivery of the SEND Futures Plan and the implementation of the written statement of action , transform the experience of children and young people with SEND and their families, so that local, high-quality education, health and social care provision meets needs and promotes independence for all children and young people with SEND whilst also delivering good value for money.	SEND Programme Director	The needs of most children and young people with SEND are met at the earliest stage in mainstream schools without the need for an education, health and care plan. 75% of children and young people with a plan are educated in local mainstream and special schools with much reduced reliance on independent and non-maintained school provision outside of the borough. The educational needs of children and young people with SEND are met within the funding provided in the Dedicated Schools Grant.	There are fewer than 1,646 education, health and care plans. 60% of children and young people with a plan are educated in local mainstream and special schools. The plan leaves to cost avoidance and mitigations of £2m per year. The re-inspection of local area SEND services by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission judges that sufficient progress has been made in implementing the written statement of action and that the overall quality of services has improved. 60% of parents and carers rate services as good or better.

Strategic priority	Priority project	Lead	How will know we have been successful in 2024?	What will we achieve by March 2023?
Positive futures (continued)	Improve the provision of occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, and physiotherapy through the implementation of recommendations identified in the review of therapies across Achieving for Children, the CCG and key partners.	Associate Director for SEND	There is an enhanced local therapies offer which is more accessible and more responsive to growing demand. 75% of parents and carers rate therapies as good or better. The revised staffing model impacts positively on the recruitment and retention of therapists and develops wider expertise across the whole SEND workforce.	25% of recommendations identified in the therapies review are implemented.
	Work with adult care and housing providers to improve pathway and transition planning for young people with SEND so that services and support are in place to meet their needs, promote independence and enable a positive experience of early adulthood.	Associate Director for SEND	All young people with SEND have an effective transition plan in place by age 15 that plans for their independence and maximises their opportunities for a positive experience of early adulthood, including planning for their transition to adult social care services where needed.	A revised transitions protocol has been agreed between Achieving for Children and adult social care services and is embedded across SEND and leaving care services.
	Develop and implement a mental health strategy that outlines responsibilities for Achieving for Children, CCG and partner organisations with clear pathways and thresholds that are easily understood by families and that effectively meet the mental health needs of children and young people in universal and more targeted provision.	Associate Director for Emotional Health	Children and young people are easily able to access high quality mental health services that have a strong focus on early intervention and prevent issues escalating to the higher levels of need. 75% of families will rate mental health services as good or better.	The review of current mental health provision at the universal level and tier 2 and tier 3 is complete with a clear action plan in place for implementing identified recommendations.

The priorities in our plan for Richmond are aligned with the Corporate Plan for 2018/22 - Standing Up for Richmond Residents - in particular the strategic outcome 4: a borough for everyone.

Achieving *more* for children in Windsor and Maidenhead

Strategic priority	Priority project	Lead	How will know we have been successful in 2024?	What will we achieve by March 2023?
Stronger families	Embed the strengthened approach to the quality assurance of frontline services so that they continue to effectively safeguard children and young people and promote their wellbeing and achievement. This will include strengthening the multi-agency focus on quality assuring EHCPs for children and young people with SEND.	Director of Children's Social Care	Quality assurance practice informs the continual development of our services so that they are relevant and responsive to changing local needs. 90% of casework is judged to be 'Good' or better as part of our quality assurance of practice in early help, children's social care, health services and support for children with SEND.	Permanent appointments have been made to increase capacity for quality assurance in both operational areas. A revised quality assurance framework is in place following feedback from recent inspections. 75% of casework is judged to be 'Good' or better.
Positive futures	Develop resources to support assessment and early intervention in mainstream early years settings, schools and colleges so that they are equipped to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND who are below the threshold for an education, health and care plan.	Schools Leadership Development Manager	All mainstream early years settings, schools and colleges are observed to confidently and effectively support children and young people with SEND who are below the threshold for an EHCP. An inclusion charter mark has been developed to formalise engagement in this scheme.	Resources to support assessment and early intervention have been developed and put in place. 80% of mainstream early years settings, schools and colleges are observed to confidently and effectively support children and young people with SEND who are below the threshold for an EHCP.
	Work with the clinical commissioning group and other partners to implement the written statement of action for SEND so that services are high quality and respond better to the needs, views and ambitions of children, young people and their families.	Schools Leadership Development Manager	Services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities are consistently high quality with 75% of parents and carers rating services as 'Good or better'.	Monitoring of local area SEND services by the Department for Education judge that services are effective and continue to improve. 60% of parents and carers rate services as 'Good or better'.

Strategic priority	Priority project	Lead	How will know we have been successful in 2024?	What will we achieve by March 2023?
Positive futures (continued)	Develop alternative education provision to better support the educational progress, achievement and wellbeing of children and young people with challenging behaviours who have been permanently excluded or are at risk of exclusion from school.	Schools Leadership Development Manager	New alternative education provision has been developed to support the needs of 36 children and young people with challenging behaviours leading to improved educational progress, attainment and outcomes (no young people are currently excluded from primary school).	The local service is judged 'Good or better' by Ofsted. The permanent exclusion rate has reduced by 10% compared to 2018/19.
	Work with adult care and housing providers to improve pathway and transition planning for young people with SEND so that services and support are in place to meet their needs, promote independence and enable a positive experience of early adulthood.	Schools Leadership Development Manager	All young people with SEND have an effective transition plan in place by the age of 15 that plans for their independence and maximises their opportunities for a positive experience of early adulthood, including planning for their transition to adult social care services where needed. All care leavers have an effective transition plan in place by the age of 15 that plans for their independence into adulthood including where they will live.	A revised transitions protocol has been agreed between Achieving for Children and adult social care services and is embedded across SEND and leaving care services. Care leavers are engaged in agreeing their pathway plan and there is suitable accommodation to support young people of differing needs into adulthood.
	Work to reduce gaps in attainment in reading, writing and mathematics between children in receipt of the Pupil Premium grant and their peers to provide the foundation for all children to achieve well and have positive choices for their future learning.	Schools Leadership Development Manager	The attainment for reading, writing and mathematics (combined) at the end of key stage 2 for pupils in receipt of the Pupil Premium grant is better than the results of the statistical neighbour peer group (summer 2024 results).	The attainment for reading, writing and mathematics (combined) at the end of key stage 2 for pupils in receipt of the Pupil Premium grant and their peers is better than the national average (summer 2021 results).

Strategic priority	Priority project	Lead	How will know we have been successful in 2024?	What will we achieve by March 2023?
Smarter working	Specify, procure and implement a new case management system to replace the existing PARIS system that is used across children's services with the aim of improving consistency of practice, reducing the administrative burden on staff, automating much of the standard reporting needs and enabling more effective collaboration with partners, families and children.	Director of Children's Services	The new case management system is in place and is operating effectively across all areas of the service. Families, children and other partners contribute to the system electronically, improving the knowledge of a given child, with data migration and staff training programmes underway.	Following a successful business case, approved by RBWM and AfC, the migration of the data to the new system is underway and core social work processes have been identified with planned go live dates.

The priorities in our plan for Windsor and Maidenhead are aligned with the Corporate Plan for 2021 - Building a borough of opportunity and innovation.

08

OUR FINANCIAL PLAN

Achieving for Children's Medium Term Financial Strategy focuses on achieving financial sustainability over the business plan period and explains how the business plan programmes and business development strategy will help achieve financial sustainability. In setting the medium term budget, we have focused on making informed recommendations that align with our commissioning councils' affordability objectives as well as making best use of available funds to achieve the best outcomes for children and young people.

The six business plan principles align with the organisation's financial objectives through the promotion of family resilience, maximising independence into adulthood through supporting young people to meet their full potential, investment in local borough resources and focusing on efficient business processes and commissioning.

The organisation will be following three overarching financial principles over the coming years.

Achieving value for money

All three of Achieving for Children's commissioning councils have historically received relatively low levels of funding for council services and as a result, services must be delivered at a lower than average cost. Achieving for Children delivers good quality services for a relatively low cost across general fund services. Education services that are funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant are delivered at average cost and the organisation is working proactively towards improving services in line with inspection findings. The programmes detailed in this programme facilitate the improved use of resources.

Maximise resources available to frontline services

Achieving for Children regularly reviews budgets to ensure that resources available to frontline services are maximised and there is a sufficient balance to ensure that frontline services have the infrastructure to ensure they can continue to support children and families.

The following four aspects are important in achieving this objective.

- Adequate needs-led budget growth and achievement of savings
- Maximise income generation
- Periodic review of emerging priority areas
- Business plan programmes must facilitate the effective use of resources

Shared budget responsibility

Achieving for Children operates a culture of shared budget responsibility with all staff being responsible for ensuring that every pound spent is maximising positive outcomes for children and young people and is in line with budget control processes. Each of the programmes identified in this business plan will have a project sponsor as well as project management and finance support. Progress against the plan and on the associated spend and savings implications will be monitored on an ongoing basis with the relevant leadership team having overarching oversight.

The financial implications, in terms of spend and savings will be carefully monitored over the plan period. It is clear that the coming years will be financially challenging for Achieving for Children given the ongoing pressure on wider public sector budgets and national increases in levels of need for children's services. It is of paramount importance that the organisation continues to work with commissioning partners to ensure a mutual understanding of existing and emerging pressures and reaches agreement on the level of funding available and how that funding should be prioritised to achieve the best possible outcomes for the children and young people we support.

