



achieving  
for children

# BUSINESS PLAN 2020-24

2023-24 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, including:

- achieving 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
- achieving a positive Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) of the multi-agency response to the identification of initial need and risk in Windsor and Maidenhead in May 2022, which focused on our 'front door', including our Single Point of Access



- developing our own local residential provision, including supported accommodation for care leavers, short break care for children and young people with disabilities, a new residential children's home, and a new short break care overnight centre for children and young people with SEND
- securing 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
- implementing 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
- becoming 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
- establishing an independent fostering agency (IFA) across all boroughs which has been judged good, and has now been operating effectively for almost three years and has led to an increase in the number of approved fostering households
- achieving '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
- launching 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
- receiving a 'good' rating across all areas following the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection of our Health Visiting and School Nursing Service in Windsor and Maidenhead in November 2022
- 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'.
- In October 2022, Ofsted revisited our SEND services in Kingston and confirmed we were making sufficient progress against our Written Statement of Action, and as a result, the formal quarterly support and challenge visits from the Department for Education and NHS England will come to an end.

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, mainly in our support of children and young people with SEND, and the delivery of our responsibilities for children in care and those leaving care. We are also seeing a sustained increase in referrals into our SPA teams across both operational areas.

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. One of our key areas for development will be establishing local placement sufficiency and agreeing a model to 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. 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.

# 02

## 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 to 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](#).



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, including **97%** in Windsor and Maidenhead, 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 to 2024 – 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 2023-24, as part of the refresh of the business plan, we have reviewed our priority projects. Some new projects have been added and some existing projects have been amended slightly to reflect new circumstances. 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?
<b>Achieving more for children across our whole organisation</b>		
<b>Stronger families</b>	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.	<p>This has been completed. We managed to minimise the disruption to our services caused by COVID-19 by adopting a flexible and pragmatic approach to service delivery. Children, young people and families continued to receive high quality services, either face-to-face or virtually, and our staff have fed back that they felt supported throughout the pandemic.</p> <p>Our service delivery has now returned to normal, with best practice identified during COVID-19 implemented, such as communicating with children in care virtually.</p> <p>A new hybrid approach to working arrangements has been established across the organisation. Staff have been supported to adapt to this change and are supported to operate effectively in this way, with the necessary IT equipment and systems support available as required.</p> <p>We are in the process of reviewing our office accommodation, and rationalising it so that it better meets the needs of hybrid working and supports our owning councils to achieve their efficiency targets. This is now considered part of our business as usual activity.</p>
<b>Successful organisation</b>	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.	<p>This has been completed. The new formalised approach to business development is now in place and the Business Development Strategy has been published alongside the business plan on our website. Our strategic vision, as set out in the strategy, is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develop cost effective approaches to support children and young people with a particular focus on more affordable, high quality, local placement options</li> <li>• innovate to improve services and support children to achieve better outcomes. We will be pioneers in the digital development space with a focus on improving efficiency and using technology to better engage with young people and partners</li> </ul> <p>The vision is supported by a number of key principles that will underpin our activity in this area. It focuses our approach to business development into three areas: the sufficiency strategy, best practice approaches, and grants and research; and sets out how we will monitor our impact.</p>

Strategic priority	Priority project	Why is this no longer included in the plan?
<b>Achieving more for children across our whole organisation</b>		
<b>Successful organisation (continued)</b>	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.	For the remainder of the business plan, we will not be prioritising the expansion of the company, and as such, we have removed this project. It may be revisited in the longer term.

Strategic priority	Priority project	Why is this no longer included in the plan?
<b>Achieving more for children across our whole organisation</b>		
<b>Smarter working</b>	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.	<p>Our digital activity has now become business as usual, led by our Digital Transformation Team. We effectively integrate digital technology into many areas of our business, which has enabled us to change how we operate and deliver value. This work is driven by our Digital, Data and IT Strategy 2021-24.</p> <p>As part of our recent digital activity we have undertaken the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Established our Digital Ambassadors scheme across Achieving for Children – the Digital Ambassadors provide a range of support including training to new starters, supporting sessions on new and existing systems, hosting Google Suite question and answer drop-in sessions and providing one-to-one support.</li> <li>• Used robotic process automation (RPA) that can help with repetitive and lower-value work, like logging into applications and systems, moving files and folders, extracting, copying, and inserting data, filling in forms, and completing routine analyses and reports freeing up staff to do more high value tasks. We have rolled our RPA in our Single Point of Access to process online referrals into our Liquid Logic case management system; and in our School Admissions team to verify the addresses submitted on school place applications against information held in council tax records.</li> <li>• Undertaken a project to establish a digital customer platform (DCP) which will be a one-stop-shop for the public to carry out online transactions with our services.</li> </ul> <p>Individuals will have their own accounts on the system where they can view all of their interactions with us via the self-service portal. The DCP is a tool used to help facilitate the needs and requirements of both our services and their service users using modern technology.</p>

Strategic priority	Priority project	Why is this no longer included in the plan?
Achieving more for children across our whole organisation		
<b>Smarter working (continued)</b>	Develop and implement an Achieving for Children <a href="#">Environment Strategy</a> 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.	<p>We have developed our Environment Strategy, which is published on our website and sets out our environmental commitments as an organisation. It sets out that we are committed to taking proactive steps to minimise the environmental impact of our activities. We will seek to deliver children's services in an environmentally-friendly way by identifying areas of change which will result in fewer carbon emissions. We work closely with our owning councils in the hope that through our actions, we will contribute to our boroughs' efforts in creating a sustainable and biodiverse environment for future generations to enjoy. The strategy sets out an action plan which is monitored regularly by the Environment Task Force, chaired by the Chief Operating and Finance Officer, which has been established to drive forward our activity.</p> <p>As part of the implementation of our strategy, we have taken part in a range of environmental activities including World Earth Day, the Big Plastic Count, the Climate Marathon, and Non Disposable Cup Day. We have also worked closely with our Youth Councils, and will continue to do so to ensure we maintain momentum.</p>

Strategic priority	Priority project	Why is this no longer included in the plan?
Achieving more for children in Kingston, Richmond, and Windsor and Maidenhead		
<b>Stronger families</b>	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.	<p>Our quality assurance framework for our frontline services is now well-established across both operational areas and is supporting our frontline staff to effectively safeguard children and young people and promote their wellbeing and achievement. The framework includes the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quantitative data, performance and intelligence including: weekly summary reports, monthly data sets presented at the Performance, Quality and Innovation Board; service, team and worker level data, quality checklists, monthly performance reports to the AfC Board and the owning councils, and annual end of year performance reporting.</li> <li>• Qualitative data and audits including: Practice Week; reports from services and teams, impact audit and thematic reviews including with our multi agency partners, direct observation of practice, appreciative evaluation; case and learning reviews; and seven minute learnings.</li> <li>• Children's, families' and carers' voices including: participation activities, impact audits, online family survey, feedback at child protection conferences and child looked after reviews, Have My Say, focus groups Corporate Parenting Board, Children in Care Council, complaints and compliments, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities participation team.</li> <li>• Practitioners' voices and input including: annual staff survey, principal social worker and head of practice learning; exit interviews; feedback to the Director of Children's Services and senior leaders; drop-in sessions, Signs of Safety practice lead sessions, and annual professional development scheme.</li> </ul> <p>Where necessary we have strengthened those areas requiring additional focus. For example, in Kingston and Richmond we have increased the SEND participation resource to enable us to more effectively capture feedback from the families we support and build stronger and more robust relationships with parents.</p>



Strategic priority	Priority project	Why is this no longer included in the plan?
<b>Achieving more for children in Kingston, Richmond, and Windsor and Maidenhead</b>		
<b>Positive futures</b>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Given the recent national change from Clinical Commissioning Groups to Integrated Care Boards/Systems (ICB/S), and the need for this to embed and become fully established, this project is no longer considered an immediate priority for the remainder of the business plan.</p> <p>However, we will continue to deliver health services in partnership with the ICB/S and other health colleagues, with a strong focus on improving the quality of services and ensuring they are as integrated as possible to support better outcomes for children, young people and their families.</p> <p>As part of our wider Achieving for Children recruitment and retention project, which is ongoing, we will be targeting recruitment in our health services with the aim of establishing a more permanent and stable workforce. This is necessary in light of national recruitment challenges, particularly in relation to therapy services.</p>

## 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, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) 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 so that Achieving for Children can respond to the different needs of service users. The board helps with the implementation of 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.

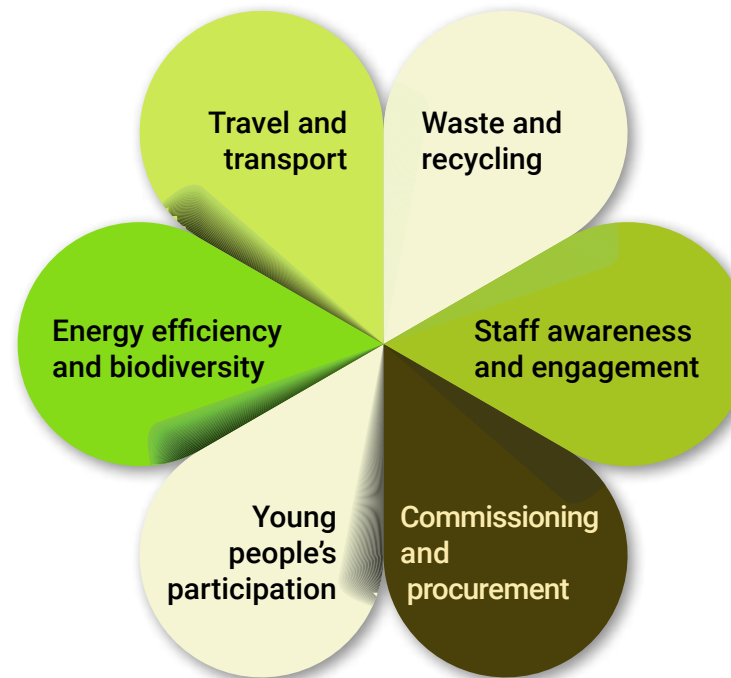
We will continue to seek the views of staff and provide a range of engagement mechanisms to ensure we hear their voice and learn from their experiences. For example, we have recently established three employee networks, which represent different characteristic groups from across Achieving for Children.

Along with colleagues in Richmond and Wandsworth, we were also part of the Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) pilot, which was based on a successful programme implemented in the NHS to improve the experiences of staff from minoritised ethnic groups. As part of the pilot, we collated data on staff from ethnic minority backgrounds in relation to areas such as recruitment, training, promotion and turnover, and used this to create an action plan to address the issues we identified. Following the successful completion of the pilot, we will continue to report on the data and the action plan annually. The project is aligned to the work of the EDI Board and will be overseen by EDI Board members.

## Our commitment to the environment

As an organisation we are committed to taking proactive steps to minimise the environmental impact of our activities. In 2021-22 we developed our first environment strategy, which sets out this commitment. We seek to deliver children's services in an environmentally-friendly way, through identifying areas of change which will result in fewer carbon emissions. We 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.

This work has now been incorporated into our business as usual activity.

# 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 for 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 on board 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?
<b>Excellent workforce</b>	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.
<b>Financial stability</b>	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.
<b>Successful organisation</b>	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.	As the needs of young people and our owning councils change, we will develop and adapt our business and delivery models to ensure we continue to meet their needs and offer value for money.
<b>Smarter working</b>	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 2023-24

### Achieving *more* for children across our whole organisation

Strategic priority	Priority project	Lead	How will know we have been successful in 2024?
Positive futures	Implement the Sufficiency Strategy to increase capacity in local foster care, residential care and supported accommodation, and work with other local authorities pan-London and pan-Berkshire to improve commissioning arrangements for placements that cannot be delivered from local, in-house provision.	Associate Director for Provider Services	<p>As an organisation, we will have a clear direction about how much residential support we will deliver ourselves and how much we will commission. To support this, we will have developed a framework that sets out principles of when each approach should be used and we will be in the process of implementing this in both operational areas.</p> <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 supported 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 accommodation 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>

Strategic priority	Priority project	Lead	How will know we have been successful in 2024?
Positive futures	Strengthen the quality and effectiveness of services delivered by the independent fostering agency (IFA), so that it supports the recruitment, training, development and retention of more foster carers and enables more children and young people to benefit from in-house family-based care.	Associate Director for Provider Services	<p>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.</p> <p>Our IFA will be judged 'Good' by Ofsted. We will have increased our total number of foster carers by 25 families.</p>
Excellent workforce	Strengthen the approach to recruitment and retention with a clear, coordinated and focused programme of activity so that we can 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.
	Ensure Achieving for Children is an inclusive and diverse organisation that celebrates differences and that represents the local communities it serves.	Equality and Diversity Board	<p>We will be moving towards having a workforce that is more reflective of the local community that it services, with established staff equality groups that work alongside the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) 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.</p> <p>We will be implementing the actions identified in the EDI action plan and participating in the Workforce Race Equality Standard annually.</p>

Strategic priority	Priority project	Lead	How will know we have been successful in 2024?
<b>Financial stability</b>	Review and strengthen capacity and arrangements for commissioning, procurement and contract management, including the joint commissioning of services with NHS South West London and the Frimley Integrated Commissioning Board, to achieve quality, value and improved outcomes for children, young people and their families	Associate Director of Business Development and Strategic Commissioning	<p>A new commissioning framework has been agreed with a focus on joint commissioning, supported by a skilled commissioning team. This will contribute to ensuring that we have robust and comprehensive commissioning arrangements including effective joint commissioning with the Integrated Commissioning Boards.</p> <p>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.</p>
<b>Smarter working</b>	Review and put in place strengthened arrangements for support services so that the company has the services it needs to be efficient, effective and deliver excellent value for money. This includes establishing a business partner model within Business Services with our operational areas, with a focus on upskilling colleagues so they are more equipped to undertake basic business service functions.	Chief Operating and Finance Officer	<p>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.</p> <p>HR will be delivered in-house and the review of the IT service level agreement will be complete. We will be taking forward the recommendations from the independent IT and digital review.</p> <p>Operational colleagues will be upskilled to take on basic business services tasks through the provision of a range of support such as project management toolkits and guidance, and IT helpdesk systems. Ongoing advice and guidance will be provided to ensure colleagues are fully equipped and comfortable undertaking these tasks. As a result, operational areas will report they are able to undertake these tasks effectively and that they feel supported.</p> <p>This will enable resources in Business Services to be targeted where they are most needed and where they provide the best value for money.</p>



Strategic priority	Priority project	Lead	How will know we have been successful in 2024?
<b>Smarter working (continued)</b>	In consultation with children, young people and families, partners and other key stakeholders, develop the new Achieving for Children Business Plan, which will set the direction for the the organisation for future years.	Chief Operating and Finance Officer	<p>A new business plan will have been developed, ready to launch in April 2024. The plan will have been drafted based on a sound understanding of the local needs in each of the three local authority areas and priorities will be identified based on robust evidence such as inspection reports, data and intelligence, needs analyses, and qualitative feedback that we collect from stakeholders.</p> <p>We will gather specific views on the plan from our children, young people and families, our owning councils, key partners such as schools and the voluntary and community sector, and our employees. This will ensure it reflects local needs accurately.</p> <p>The plan will also align with any strategic plans or priorities of key partners such as our owning councils and health colleagues.</p>

# Achieving *more* for children in Kingston

Strategic priority	Priority project	Lead	How will know we have been successful in 2024?
Stronger families	Implement the Families First safeguarding model by embedding specialist adult practitioners in family social work teams in order to provide a whole-family approach to child protection and ensure that children are able to safely remain within their families.	Director of Children's Services	The Families First safeguarding model will be established. Internal reviews of practice will evidence that Signs of Safety and systemic approaches are embedded. 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 at least 'Good' or 'Outstanding' in their overall effectiveness.
	Work with statutory partners and voluntary, community and faith sector organisations to strengthen the local early help offer by continuing to develop early help resilience networks and implementing Family Hubs, to build resilience in families so they are better able to protect and meet the needs of children without the need for higher-tier services or ongoing social work support.	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. The development of Family Hubs will be underway with a clear plan for implementation. 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.

Strategic priority	Priority project	Lead	How will know we have been successful in 2024?
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.
	Deliver the SEND Futures Plan (including the Safety Valve Agreement) to transform the experiences of children and young people with SEND and their families, so that local, high-quality education, health and social care provision meets children's assessed needs and maximises their independence, whilst also delivering value for money and operating within the available DSG high needs funding.	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. 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>
	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, NHS South West London and key partners.	Associate Director for SEND and Associate Director for Health	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.

Strategic priority	Priority project	Lead	How will know we have been successful in 2024?
<b>Positive futures (continued)</b>	Work with adult care, health 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	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
	Contribute to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) transformation programme at place and south-west London ICS levels, including by expanding coverage of the Mental Health in Schools Teams to all schools in Kingston and Richmond and by strengthening Tier 2 CAMHS services to reduce the waiting times for assessment and treatment.	Associate Director for Emotional Health	<p>Children and young people are more 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.</p> <p>There are Mental Health in Schools Teams in all schools across Kingston and waiting times for assessment and treatment have been reduced at Tier 2 CAHMS services.</p>

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. We will contribute to the development of the new Kingston Corporate Plan to ensure that the plans continue to align.

# Achieving *more* for children in Richmond

Strategic priority	Priority project	Lead	How will know we have been successful in 2024?
Stronger families	Implement the Families First safeguarding model by embedding specialist adult practitioners in family social work teams in order to provide a whole-family approach to child protection and ensure that children are able to safely remain within their families.	Director of Children's Services	The Families First safeguarding model will be established. Internal reviews of practice will evidence that Signs of Safety and systemic approaches are embedded. 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 at least 'Good' or 'Outstanding' in their overall effectiveness.
	Work with statutory partners and voluntary, community and faith sector organisations to strengthen the local early help offer by continuing to develop early help resilience networks and implementing Family Hubs, to build resilience in families so they are better able to protect and meet the needs of children without the need for higher-tier services or ongoing social work support.	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. The development of Family Hubs will be underway with a clear plan for implementation. 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.

Strategic priority	Priority project	Lead	How will know we have been successful in 2024?
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.
	Deliver the SEND Futures Plan (including the Safety Valve Agreement) to transform the experiences of children and young people with SEND and their families, so that local, high-quality education, health and social care provision meets children's assessed needs and maximises their independence, whilst also delivering value for money and operating within the available DSG high needs funding.	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. 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> <p>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.</p>
	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.



Strategic priority	Priority project	Lead	How will know we have been successful in 2024?
<b>Positive futures (continued)</b>	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 and Associate Director for Health	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
	Contribute to the CAMHS transformation programme at place and south-west London ICS levels, including by expanding coverage of the Mental Health in Schools Teams to all schools in Kingston and Richmond and by strengthening Tier 2 CAMHS services to reduce the waiting times for assessment and treatment.	Associate Director for Emotional Health	<p>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.</p> <p>There are Mental Health in Schools Teams in all schools across Richmond and waiting times for assessment and treatment have been reduced at Tier 2 CAHMS services.</p>

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. We will contribute to the development of the new Richmond Corporate Plan to ensure that the plans continue to align.

# Achieving *more* for children in Windsor and Maidenhead

Strategic priority	Priority project	Lead	How will know we have been successful in 2024?
<b>Stronger families</b>	Establish an intensive support team to work with children on the edge of care to support them to remain with their families where safe to do so, and to work with children in care so that where appropriate they can be reunified with parents or placed in their extended family or community. As part of this, support foster placements where there are stability issues and step appropriate children down from residential placements to foster placements.	Director of Children's Social Care	The intensive support team will be well established and operating effectively with evidence of impact. This will include: an increased number of children remaining within their family network, a reduction in the number of children in residential provision, and reduction in the number of children in care overall.
<b>Positive futures</b>	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.	Deputy Director for Education	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 ICB 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.	Deputy Director for Education	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?
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.	Deputy Director for Education	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).
	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.	Deputy Director for Education	Following the implementation of a revised transitions protocol, agreed between Achieving for Children and adult social care services, 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.
	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.	Deputy Director for Education	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).

Strategic priority	Priority project	Lead	How will know we have been successful in 2024?
<b>Smarter working</b>	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.

The priorities in our plan for Windsor and Maidenhead are aligned with the Corporate Plan for 2021-2026: 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 plan 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.

The medium term financial plan can be found on our [website](#).

