



Committee and Date

**People Overview
Scrutiny Committee**

1 July 2026

Item

Children's Services
Performance Report
and Local Outcomes
Framework Scorecard

Public



Children's Services Quarter 1 Performance Report and National Local Outcomes Performance Framework Scorecard

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1. Synopsis

- 1.1 This report presents the Children's Services developing performance scorecard and reporting approach for the People Overview Scrutiny Committee, aligned to the 2026 Local Outcomes Framework.
- 1.2 The scorecard has been developed with national reforms in mind and will continue to evolve to keep pace with the changes ahead. Including the Children's Social Care National Framework and the 2026 Delivering the children's social care reset: an implementation Plan for local partners.
- 1.3 Children's Services Analysis Tool (ChAT) dated 18 June 2026, which provides the latest six-month and snapshot position available for this report.

- 1.4 The analysis of the Chat Tool indicates that core areas of statutory practice and safeguarding performance are being sustained into **Quarter 1**, alongside continued system pressure driven by demand, complexity, and placement sufficiency challenges. The report supports member oversight of both performance and areas requiring continued improvement and challenge.
- 1.5 It asks the Committee to note, and comment on, the proposed member-facing framework for future reporting and the Children's Services Analysis Tool (ChAT) appendix dated 18 June 2026, including the key issues arising for scrutiny and oversight.

Key message for members

- 1.6 The proposed scorecard should be read alongside the Children's Services Analysis Tool (ChAT) dated 18 June 2026. The updated ChAT indicates that statutory practice and safeguarding activity continue to be sustained, with assessments completed within 45 working days at 87%, children seen during assessment at 98%, and initial child protection conferences held within 15 working days at 77%. It also highlights continuing pressure across demand, children looked after, placement sufficiency, health and dental compliance, and care leaver outcomes.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report presents the proposed Children's Services performance scorecard for 2026–2027, aligned to the National Local Outcomes Framework and informed by current national reforms, including the national outcomes and enablers, the Children's Social Care Dashboard and the Local Authority Interactive Tool,
- 2.2 The report should be read alongside the Children's Services Analysis Tool (ChAT) dated 18 June 2026, which provides the latest six-month and snapshot view of performance. The analysis indicates that core statutory practice, including assessments, safeguarding processes and children being seen, is being sustained into Quarter 1, reflecting stable frontline delivery and effective operational oversight.
- 2.3 At the same time, the ChAT dated 18 June 2026 highlights continued system pressure. It reports 6,491 contacts, 633 referrals and 1,193 assessments in the last six months, with 1,360 children in need with an open episode, 224 children subject to a child protection plan, and 666 children looked after with an open episode of care. Whilst care leaver contact remains strong, outcomes in education, employment and training remain variable, and compliance with health and dental checks for children looked after requires continued scrutiny. These issues are subject to regular oversight and challenge in the service.
- 2.4 Taken together, this presents a position of stable and safe practice under pressure. This requires a continued shift towards reducing demand, strengthening early intervention, and improving long-term outcomes for children and young people.
- 2.5 The Children's Services Reforms Cabinet paper presented on 10 June 2026 set out Shropshire's proposed integrated response to national children's reforms through a single Children's Transformation programme. The programme brings together Families First Partnership, Best Start in Life, SEND Reforms, Youth Transformation and the Private Law Pathfinder, with a shared focus on earlier intervention,

inclusion, multi-agency working, sufficiency and improved outcomes for children and families.”

- 2.6 The proposed Children's Services performance scorecard is aligned to Shropshire Council's Corporate Plan 2026–2030 by strengthening the line of sight between children's outcomes, statutory responsibilities, demand management, sufficiency, workforce capacity, performance assurance and financial sustainability. The Corporate Plan places financial sustainability, clear priorities and a supported workforce at the centre of the Council's operating model, with activity expected to be realistic, affordable and focused on delivering the greatest possible impact for residents. For Children's Services, this means sustaining safe statutory practice and delivering national reform while reducing avoidable escalation, improving early help and family support, strengthening placement sufficiency, and ensuring that improvement activity is prioritised within the Council's available resources.
- 2.7 The proposed scorecard is structured around the Local Outcomes Framework, bringing together headline outcomes, statutory performance, demand, stability, and impact. It provides a clear and proportionate member-facing framework for ongoing scrutiny and oversight.
- 2.8 **Appendix 1** provides the Children's Services Analysis Tool (ChAT) dated 18 June 2026. **Appendix 2** provides the Draft Children's Services Performance Scorecard Workbook, which is planned to form the core member-facing reporting tool for ongoing scrutiny and oversight.
- 2.9 **Appendix 3** sets out the reference list to include the recent updates of statutory and national guidance underpinning the performance framework shared.

Key Issues for Scrutiny – Quarter 1 2026/27

Theme	Current Position (Q1)	Risk / Issue	Focus for Scrutiny
Demand (Front Door)	Sustained high volume of contacts, referrals, and assessments	Ongoing pressure on capacity and consistency of response	How effectively demand is being managed and reduced through early help and Families First
Safeguarding Practice	Statutory practice (assessments, S47, visits) is secure and being sustained	Risk of deterioration if demand continues to rise	How quality and timeliness of practice are being maintained under pressure
Children in Need & CP	Cohorts remain high, reflecting ongoing complexity	Risk of system drift and longer-term intervention	Effectiveness of plans in reducing risk and step-down activity
Children Looked After (CLA)	CLA population remains high with continued inflow	Sufficiency challenges and financial pressure	Progress in reducing numbers and improving permanence
Placement Sufficiency	Ongoing reliance on external placements	Limited local capacity, especially fostering	Impact of sufficiency strategy and fostering recruitment
Care Leavers – Contact	Strong “in touch” performance	Positive position to sustain	Maintaining relational practice and engagement

Care Leavers – Outcomes (EET)	Variable performance in education, employment, and training	Risk of poorer long-term outcomes	How services are improving EET and independence outcomes
Health & Compliance (CLA)	Some inconsistency in health and dental checks	Risk of statutory non-compliance	Actions to improve compliance and oversight
Workforce & Capacity	Practice is stable but under pressure	Risk to sustainability if demand continues	Workforce capacity, caseloads, and quality of supervision

3. Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

- 3.1 Note the Children's Services Performance Report and Local Outcomes Framework Scorecard, including the proposed member-facing reporting framework for the People Overview Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.2 Support and provide comments/amendments on the proposed use of the Local Outcomes Framework scorecard measures as the basis for future quarterly member reporting, subject to final validation of data definitions, baselines, and narrative.
- 3.3 Consider the observations in this report regarding reporting cadence and the challenge of aligning committee publication deadlines with current quarter-end performance cycles.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

4.1 Risk table

<i>Risk</i>	<i>Mitigation</i>	<i>Link to Strategic Risk</i>
Headline performance information is incomplete or not yet fully embedded within the new National Local Outcomes Framework and local governance expectations.	The updated scorecard provides a structured reporting framework aligned to the Local Outcomes Framework, statutory timeliness, qualitative assurance, and local governance routes, while also taking account of the national outcomes and enablers. Measures will continue to be refined through service validation, data and performance input, and alignment with the quality assurance framework before they are embedded as the routine	Governance and Compliance Performance and Assurance

	<p>quarterly member-facing report. This includes ensuring that performance reporting reflects the sustained demand, complexity and sufficiency pressures identified through the ChAT analysis.</p>	
<p>Numbers of children looked after remain static or increase further</p>	<p>Strengthen the "right service at the right time," early intervention across the partnership.</p> <p>Ensure consistency in the Front Door application to referrals.</p> <p>Continue to implement and expand Stepping Stones service methodology for prevention and step-down processes.</p> <p>Further develop a culture and practice where all staff are committed to retaining children and young people safely within their families and communities while actively engaging with them. If care is required, prioritise foster placements,</p> <p>Ensure robust decision-making processes and escalate sign-off procedures to the Service Director (SD) and Director of Children's Services (DCS) as appropriate.</p> <p>We aim to reduce CLA spending from 80% to 50% of our budget. The developing improvement/action plan related to placements, sufficiency, partnership, and commissioning support will underpin this intention as outlined through the paper.</p> <p>Our priorities include:</p> <p>Implementing Families First Programme and delivering the national requirements for the implementation.</p> <p>Delivering intervention models that ensure timely access to services, prevent escalation into statutory care, and support children and families within their communities.</p> <p>Enhancing capacity through strategic commissioning, data-driven decisions, and planning to address complex needs, including increasing fostering and residential home options.</p>	<p>Financial Sustainability.</p> <p>Demand Management</p> <p>Governance and Compliance.</p> <p>Financial Controls</p>

	<p>Achieving timely outcomes through effective assessments, child in need and protection plans, ensuring permanence and enabling swift, appropriate exits from care.</p> <p>Reducing statutory intervention and ensuring timely family support to limit budget increases.</p>	
<p>Reporting timelines do not fully align with quarter-end data availability, which continues to limit the completeness of published performance information.</p>	<p>For this reporting cycle, the report will focus on the proposed framework and the available headline scorecard information.</p> <p>Officers will continue to review the timing of future reporting cycles so that committee reporting better reflects quarter-end positions and supports more complete quarterly assurance.</p>	<p>Governance and Compliance Reputation and Transparency</p>
<p>Some measures remain under development, including indicators that are not yet routinely available or require further refinement and future automation.</p>	<p>The updated framework distinguishes between measures that are available now and those that require further development. This allows scrutiny to begin with a proportionate set of Local Outcomes Framework headline indicators while supporting phased improvements to data quality, reporting automation, and assurance over time.</p>	<p>Performance and Assurance Transformation and Delivery</p>
<p>Fostering Capacity is not increased at rates needed to meet the</p>	<p>Sufficiency assessment is being further developed to secure clear understanding of requirements.</p>	<p>Financial Sustainability.</p>

<p>requirements of our children that need to be looked after for their safety and protection and to avoid use of residential homes at the point of crises</p>	<p>Enhanced recruitment efforts have been subject to substantial improvements in marketing strategies and the implementation of a more efficient process, which includes regular check-ins with all interested applicants. Being ready to take them forward as a service when they are ready to progress.</p> <p>West Midlands Regional Care Cooperative application to be progressed to support commissioning approaches, pricing and care offers to become increasingly consistent.</p> <p>See Fostering paper at Appendix 2</p>	<p>Demand Management</p> <p>Demographic Change</p> <p>Governance and Compliance.</p> <p>Financial Controls</p>
<p>Sufficiency Strategy drift and delay of implementation</p>	<p>Strengthened commissioning advice and application including collaborative working across the council departments</p>	<p>Financial Sustainability.</p> <p>Demand Management</p> <p>Demographic Change</p> <p>Governance and Compliance.</p> <p>Financial Controls</p>

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct new financial implications arising from noting this report. The scorecard is intended to strengthen oversight of demand, statutory timeliness, placement stability, workforce pressures, and sufficiency issues that already have material financial consequences for the Council. Improved performance reporting is expected to support earlier identification of risk, stronger challenge, and better-informed decision-making.
- 5.2 This is consistent with Shropshire Council's Corporate Plan 2026–2030, which requires services to prioritise statutory responsibilities, make best use of available resources, and support the Council's wider financial sustainability and improvement journey. The scorecard supports this by bringing together performance, demand, sufficiency and outcome measures so that members can scrutinise not only whether services are safe and effective, but also whether actions are reducing escalation, improving placement stability, supporting earlier help and contributing to financial sustainability.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1 The Children's Services is working to support people within their communities to reduce the need to travel and therefore reduce carbon emissions.
- 6.2 Climate consideration is embedded in all commissioning reviews.

7. Background

- 7.1 This report should be read alongside the proposed performance scorecard workbook, which sets out the wider reporting architecture across operational management, Children's Leadership Team, Shropshire Council Improvement Board and Scrutiny/Cabinet reporting. The latest update reflects the emerging Local Outcomes Framework as the organising structure for the member-facing scorecard, while also taking account of the national outcomes and enablers and the fact that the national scorecard remains centrally in development.
- 7.1A This report reflects the position at the point of publication. The Local Outcomes Framework update improves the clarity and relevance of the proposed reporting model, although some measures remain developmental and will continue to be refined through implementation and data validation.
- 7.2 In developing the performance framework, officers have considered the principal statutory guidance, policy documents and supporting resources that shape expectations for children's social care, safeguarding, SEND, and alternative provision. These include the Children's Social Care National Framework, the Children's Social Care Dashboard and supporting information, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026, the Families First Partnership programme guide, the SEND and alternative provision improvement plan, and relevant inspection and accountability guidance, alongside local strategy, and performance materials.
- 7.2A Further post-POSC development of the performance scorecard will include further integration of additional core Learning and Skills datasets in order to strengthen member oversight across the wider education and children's services system. This will support scrutiny of SEND reform improvement activity, Best Start in Life priorities, the quality assurance of education settings, and safeguarding arrangements in schools across Shropshire. It is intended that the scorecard will provide a broader line of sight across how the Council and its partners are supporting children and young people to be safe, visible, and engaged in education at all stages. Virtual School outcomes and associated data will also be incorporated to strengthen oversight of corporate parenting responsibilities and support appropriate scrutiny and challenge.
- 7.2B The proposed reporting approach is also informed by the national Children's Social Care Dashboard and the outcomes and enablers set out in the Children's Social Care National Framework. The intention is that local reporting will support members to understand progress against the national direction of travel while maintaining a locally relevant overview of demand, quality, safety, sufficiency, and impact. The national framework identifies four outcomes for children's social care and three system enablers, and these are reflected in the development of the local scorecard and its future refinement.

Children's Services Analysis Tool (ChAT)

- 7.3 The Children's Services Analysis Tool (ChAT) dated 18 June 2026 provides the latest available overview of performance and activity across the children's social care system and should be read as a supporting appendix to this report. It brings together six-month and snapshot data across key areas including contacts,

referrals, assessments, safeguarding activity, children in need, child protection, children looked after, care leavers and adoption.

Current Performance Position

7.4 The ChAT dated 18 June 2026 indicates that core areas of statutory practice and frontline delivery are being sustained. Assessments completed within 45 working days are reported at 87%, children seen during assessment at 98%, and initial child protection conferences held within 15 working days at 77%. Care leaver “in touch” performance remains strong, particularly for former relevant young people aged 19–21, where contact is reported at 97%.

System Pressures

7.5 However, the 18 June ChAT highlights sustained system pressure. In the last six months there were 6,491 contacts, 633 referrals, 1,193 assessments, 436 section 47 enquiries and 154 initial child protection conferences. The children in need and child protection cohorts remain material, with 1,360 children in need with an open episode and 224 children subject to a child protection plan at the latest snapshot. The looked after children population also remains high, with 666 children looked after with an open episode of care.

7.6 The ChAT dated 18 June 2026 also identifies areas requiring continued improvement and assurance. These include children looked after health assessments at 65%, dental checks at 45%, children subject to child protection plans seen alone at their last visit at 68%, and variable care leaver education, employment and training outcomes, including 58% for relevant/former relevant 17–18 year olds and 54% for former relevant 19–21 year olds.

Implications for Improvement

7.7 Taken together, the ChAT dated 18 June 2026 demonstrates a service that is maintaining safe and effective practice under pressure. Key areas for continued improvement include:

- Strengthening early intervention and demand management
- Reducing reliance on care through permanence and sufficiency strategies
- Improving care leaver outcomes
- Maintaining workforce capacity and quality of practice

Use for Member Oversight

7.8 The ChAT appendix enables members to consider both the sustainability of current access to early help and children’s social care practice and the impact of ongoing system pressures. It supports focused scrutiny of where performance is stable, where risks remain elevated, and where further improvement activity is required. This tool is reviewed weekly by service managers with their teams, and challenge and support is embedded in the system and supervision to address and implement mitigating actions to redress the challenge seen.

Summary overview for scrutiny

7.9 The ChAT report dated 18 June 2026 indicates sustained volume across front door activity and safeguarding processes, including contacts, referrals, assessments, section 47 enquiries, and child protection conferences, alongside a children in need cohort and child protection population that remain material for operational and strategic oversight. It also shows a looked after children population that remains high, ongoing placement sufficiency pressures, and continuing importance of scrutiny over permanence, stability, missing from care, health and dental compliance, and care leaver outcomes.

Use for member oversight

7.10 The ChAT appendix enables members to consider current performance in the round and supports focused challenge about where performance is improving, where risks remain elevated, and where further assurance is required. It also provides a baseline reference point against which the proposed Performance Framework scorecard can continue to develop and strengthen member-facing reporting.

Further development of the performance framework

7.11 Further development of the Children's Services performance scorecard will include the integration of core education and learning datasets to strengthen oversight across the wider children's services system.

7.12 This will support a more comprehensive view of performance across education, SEND, early help and safeguarding, ensuring that members have clear line of sight across how children and young people are supported to be safe, visible and engaged in education.

7.13 This next phase of development is intended to ensure that the scorecard provides whole-system oversight, bringing together social care, education and partnership performance into a single, coherent framework for scrutiny.

7.14 In parallel, work is underway with the Corporate Centre to align the Children's Services scorecard with the Council's wider performance and assurance arrangements, including reporting to the Corporate Improvement Board.

7.15 This will support greater consistency in performance reporting, strengthen organisational oversight and ensure that children's services priorities are fully embedded within the Council's corporate governance framework.

8. Conclusions

8.1 The report provides members with the proposed Local Outcomes Framework scorecard together with the Children's Services Analysis Tool (ChAT) dated 18 June 2026. Taken together, these demonstrate that statutory practice and safeguarding performance are being sustained into Quarter 1, while also highlighting continued pressures relating to demand, complexity, looked after children, placement sufficiency, health and dental compliance and care leaver outcomes. The report supports member oversight of both current performance and

the priority areas for improvement required to strengthen outcomes for children, young people, and families.

Local Member: *Applicable to all Members*

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Children's Services Analysis Tool (ChAT) dated 18 June 2026

Provides the detailed six-month and snapshot data across the children's social care system, including demand, safeguarding activity, children in need, child protection, children looked after, care leavers and adoption. This appendix underpins the Q1 performance analysis presented within this report and supports member scrutiny of performance, risk, and outcomes.

Appendix 2 – Children's Services Performance Scorecard Workbook (Local Outcomes Framework)

[Appendix 2 - Children's Services Performance Scorecard workbook.xlsx](#)

Provides the detailed performance scorecard aligned to the Local Outcomes Framework, including headline measures, statutory indicators, demand, stability, and outcomes. This forms the core member-facing reporting tool for ongoing scrutiny and oversight.

Appendix 3 Reference List: National and Local Guidance Informing the Performance Framework

1. Statutory and national children's social care framework documents

- Department for Education (2026) *Children's Social Care National Framework*
- Department for Education (2026) *Children's Social Care Dashboard and supporting information.*
- Department for Education (2026) *Working Together to Safeguard Children*

National outcomes and enablers reflected in this report:

- Outcome 1 – Children, young people, and families stay together and get the help they need.
- Outcome 2 – Children and young people are safe in and outside of their homes.
- Outcome 3 – Children and young people are supported by their family network.
- Outcome 4 – Children in care and care leavers have stable, loving homes.
- Enabler – Multi-agency working is prioritised and effective.
- Enabler – Leaders drive conditions for effective practice.
- Enabler – The workforce is equipped and effective.

1. Reform and implementation guidance.

- Department for Education (2026) Children's Social Care Reform: Delivering the Children's Social Care National Framework Implementation Plan
- Department for Education (2026) Families First Partnership Programme Guide
- Department for Education and Pathfinder Programme Materials (2025–2026) Families First for Children implementation resources

1. Inspection and accountability guidance

- Ofsted (2026) *Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS)*

1. SEND, Alternative Provision and Early Years reform guidance.

- Department for Education (2023) *SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan*
- Department for Education (2026) *SEND Reform: Putting Children and Young People First*
- Department for Education (2025) *Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life*
- Department for Education (2025) *Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies: Implementation Guidance*

1. Local strategy, performance, and oversight materials

- Shropshire Council Children's Services (2026) *Local Outcomes Framework*
- Local SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy and associated materials
- Children's Services *Performance Scorecard Workbook*
- Children's Services *ChAT Performance Oversight and Reporting Materials*