

To: Councillor Asare (Chair)
Councillors McEwan, Ballsdon,
Cresswell, Eden, Gittings, Griffith,
Keane, Lanzoni, Magon, Naz, Mpofu-
Coles, O'Connell, DP Singh and
Woodward

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7 October 2025

Your contact is: Jemma Durkan - Committee Services

NOTICE OF MEETING - ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE 15 OCTOBER 2025

A meeting of the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee will be held on **Wednesday, 15 October 2025 at 6.30 pm** in the **Council Chambers, Civic Offices, Reading**. The Agenda for the meeting is set out below.

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AGENDA	
1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
Councillors to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in relation to the items for consideration.	
2. DELEGATED DECISIONS	5 - 6
3. MINUTES	7 - 18
4. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES	19 - 36
Health and Wellbeing Board –	
14 March 2025	
11 July 2025	
5. PETITIONS	

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Petitions submitted pursuant to Standing Order 36 in relation to matters falling within the Committee's Powers & Duties which have been received by Head of Legal & Democratic Services no later than four clear working days before the meeting.

6. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS

Questions submitted pursuant to Standing Order 36 in relation to matters falling within the Committee's Powers & Duties which have been submitted in writing and received by the Head of Legal & Democratic Services no later than four clear working days before the meeting.

7. JOINT TARGETED AREA INSPECTION UPDATE 37 - 48

The Committee will receive a report providing an update of the delivery of the Joint Targeted Area Inspection Partnership Action Plan.

8. DENTISTRY UPDATE 49 - 66

The Committee will receive an update from the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (BOB) Integrated Care Board on access to dental care and advice.

9. SCHOOL ADMISSIONS POLICY 2027/2028 CONSULTATION 67 - 136

The Committee will receive a report to consider a proposed consultation on the relevant admission arrangements for 2027-28.

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Committee	Date of meeting	Minute number	Item title	Decision	Officer delegated to	Lead Councillor portfolio	Expected timescale for decision
ACE Committee	02/07/25	8	Supported Living Framework Tender	That the Executive Director of Communities and Adult Social Care, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Adult Social Care, the Director of Finance, and the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be given delegated authority to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procure and enter into a contract with successful tenderer(s) for the support/care services to be provided. The contract would be for up to 10 years (5 initial years and then up to 5 further years); <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negotiate with the successful tenderer(s) to mobilise the contract, vary the contract, extend the contract at the appropriate time and otherwise contract manage the contract throughout its lifecycle. 	Exec Director of Community and Adult Social Care Services; Director of Finance/s151 officer, Adult Social Care AD of Legal & Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer/Returning Officer		Tender documents published on 26/09/2025 so the period is now open to receive applications. On track to formally award and initiate mobilisation in early January, with the contract commencing from 1st April.
ACE Committee	02/07/25	9	Homecare Framework Tender	That the Executive Director of Communities and Adult Social Care, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Adult Social Care, the Director of Finance, and the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be granted delegated authority to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procure and enter into a contract with the successful tenderer(s) for the support / care services to be provided. The contract would be for up to 10 years (5 initial years and then up to 5 further years). Negotiate with the successful tenderer(s) to mobilise the contract, vary the contract, extend the contract at the appropriate time, and otherwise contract manage the contract throughout its lifecycle. 	Exec Director of Community and Adult Social Care Services; Director of Finance/s151 officer, Adult Social Care AD of Legal & Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer/Returning Officer	TBC	

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Agenda Item 3

ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING

MINUTES - 2 JULY 2025

Present: Councillor Asare (Chair);

Councillors Ballsdon, Cresswell, Eden, Gittings, Griffith, Keane, Lanzoni, Naz, Mpofu-Coles, O'Connell, DP Singh and Woodward

1. DELEGATED DECISIONS

The delegated decision agreed at the ACE Committee meeting on 15 January 2025 was noted. It was also noted that there were no delegated decisions taken at the meeting on 19 March 2025.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. INTRODUCTION TO GREENSHAW LEARNING TRUST

Will Smith, Chief Executive Officer of the Greenshaw Learning Trust attended the meeting to provide information to the Committee on the Trust, the work being undertaken at John Madejski Academy and to answer questions from members of the Committee. The main points noted were:

- The Greenshaw Learning Trust (GLT) was a 10-year-old multi-academy trust with 37 schools across the South of England, including Reading.
- GLT valued strong relationships with local authorities and noted the support and collaboration being undertaken with officers at the Council.
- The Trust's ethos was encapsulated in its motto "Always Learning," reflecting a commitment to continuous improvement across all levels.
- GLT supported a wide range of schools (urban, rural, coastal) and used its diverse network to share best practices and solutions.
- John Madejski Academy (JMA) joined GLT under challenging circumstances; the Trust had a strong track record of turning around underperforming schools.
- Early improvements at JMA included a calmer, more orderly environment, improved student behaviour, and a focus on student happiness and academic success.
- GLT emphasised high expectations, a broad curriculum, and strong pastoral care, with a commitment to character development and academic outcomes.
- All GLT schools inspected by Ofsted had been rated Good or Outstanding.
- The Trust was committed to reducing suspensions and exclusions through consistent behaviour policies and supportive interventions.
- Uniform and equipment expectations were enforced with support: students were not excluded for non-compliance alone, and uniform was provided free where needed.

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- A name change from John Madejski Academy to Hartland High School would take effect from 1 September 2025; the change followed community consultation and was intended to support school improvement.
- Sir John Madejski had visited the school and expressed support for the changes, including plans to honour his legacy within the school.
- GLT was committed to supporting vulnerable children and those with special educational needs (SEND), employing a range of therapists and specialists.
- The Trust was trauma-informed and worked to identify and address underlying causes of behavioural issues, including through partnerships with social services.
- GLT welcomed visits from councillors and community members and was committed to ongoing engagement and transparency.
- The new substantive Headteacher, Emily Davies, would take up post in September 2025, bringing strong leadership to the next phase of the school's improvement journey.

The Chair thanked Will Smith for attending the meeting and welcomed an update to be provided to a future Committee meeting.

4. ANNUAL SCHOOL STANDARDS AND ACHIEVEMENT REPORT 2023/2024

The Committee received a report presenting the Annual School Standards and Achievement Report for the academic year 2023/2024. The report outlined the performance of schools in Reading, highlighted key trends in attainment and attendance, and set out strategic priorities for continued improvement.

The Lead Member for Education & Public Health, and the Director of Education introduced the report, noting that it was based on verified data from the 2023/24 academic year. The positive impact of early years and primary phase interventions were highlighted particularly in phonics and reading outcomes, and noted improvements in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. However, there were ongoing challenges, including variability in secondary outcomes, persistent absenteeism, and disparities affecting children of Black Caribbean Heritage.

The Committee was informed that the Education Partnership Board had identified strategic priorities to address these issues, including enhanced community engagement, targeted support for vulnerable groups, and a strengthened focus on 14–19 education pathways. The report also included, for the first time, a detailed analysis of attendance and its impact on attainment.

Simon Uttley, Headteacher of Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School, and Co-Chair of the Reading Education Partnership Board was present at the meeting, addressed the Committee and answered questions. The main points noted were:

- The Education Partnership Board was not common across all authorities, making it a unique and valuable entity.
- The board's role was to unite school leaders, governors, officers, and other stakeholders around a shared vision.

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- The new substantive head of the John Madejski Academy, who would begin in September and had already engaged with the community at the secondary heads residential conference.
- There had been a positive reception of the new head's involvement and commitment to the shared vision in Reading.
- The current work of the partnership was exciting and innovative.
- There was active engagement being undertaken with the university sector and employers.
- Medium-term strategic planning would also soon be undertaken with the Board and officers.

Members asked a number of questions and the following points were noted:

- The Children Missing Education report was included in the materials for the upcoming Suspensions and Exclusions Task and Finish Group.
- EHCP students undergo formal assessment, while SEN Support students were supported directly by schools.
- A recent anti-racism education conference was held in partnership with Reading University, focusing on inclusive curricula and pedagogy.
- Schools were working on anti-racist practices, with some staff engaged in doctoral-level research.
- A School Effectiveness Framework would be implemented from September to support inclusive practices.
- A community action plan was being developed, with events planned before the end of the summer term. Councillors would be invited to participate in these initiatives and visit schools to observe best practices.
- Year 1 phonics results showed 80.7% of students achieved expected standards, surpassing the national average.
- The School Effectiveness Team had played a key role in supporting and challenging schools to improve outcomes.
- Strategic direction over the past 2–3 years was beginning to yield positive results, especially in early years and primary education.
- Teachers in primary settings were dedicated to raising standards and improving student outcomes.
- The standards team was recognised for its credibility, professionalism, and impact on school performance.
- Persistent attainment gaps for Black and Caribbean heritage children were highlighted as a key concern.
- Emphasis on trauma-informed approaches and decolonising education to improve learning outcomes.
- Teachers and schools were voluntarily contributing efforts to address equity and inclusion challenges.
- Focus needed to extend beyond primary education to include FE colleges, apprenticeships, and work readiness.
- Challenges remained for students aged 14–19, particularly those with SEND needs.
- A recommendation was proposed to explore partnerships to better support 14–19-year-olds.

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Members welcomed the report and commended the work of Brighter Futures for Children and school leaders. They discussed the importance of addressing cohort complexity, supporting schools with high proportions of vulnerable pupils, and ensuring that all children have access to high-quality, inclusive education.

The Committee noted the removal of the School Improvement and Monitoring Brokerage Grant and the continued funding of improvement work through the Dedicated Schools Grant.

Resolved –

- (1) That the position regarding school standards and attainment be noted;**
- (2) That the priorities and current and planned activity to further improve attainment, with a focus on reducing inequalities, as set out in Section 16 of the associated report, be endorsed;**
- (3) That the Committee receive a future update from the Task and Finish Group on attendance and suspensions.**
- (4) That partnerships working be explored to better support 14–19-year-olds.**

5. RESPONSE TO THE JOINT TARGETED AREA INSPECTION OF THE MULTI-AGENCY RESPONSE TO CHILDREN WHO ARE VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE IN READING

The Committee received a report that summarised the findings of the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) conducted in Reading from 24 February to 14 March 2025. The inspection, carried out by Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP), focused on the multi-agency response to unborn children and children aged 0 to 7 years who are victims of domestic abuse.

The Lead Member for Children and the Director of Children's Services introduced the report, highlighting the inspection's findings, which included both strengths and areas for improvement. Strengths identified included the valued multidisciplinary response provided by family help and children's centres, the effectiveness of the pre-birth panel, and the support from specialist domestic abuse health professionals. However, the inspection also identified a Priority Action due to inconsistent information-sharing and weak decision-making that placed children at risk.

The Committee was informed that both single and multi-agency action plans were implemented at pace to address the identified weaknesses. These plans included improvements in strategy meeting timeliness, safety planning, information-sharing, and the use of data to understand the prevalence and impact of domestic abuse on children.

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Governance structures have been established to oversee progress, and a Partnership Action Plan would be submitted to Ofsted by 13 August 2025.

Chief Superintendent Felicity Parker, LCU Commander for Berkshire West attended the meeting to provide information on the work undertaken by Thames Valley Police (TVP) in relation to multi-agency safeguarding, particularly within the Berkshire West area. A number of questions were asked and the following key points were noted:

- A multi-agency safeguarding plan with additional single agency plans in place for Berkshire West and the wider Thames Valley area had been submitted.
- TVP would focus on improving data sharing with schools through Operation Encompass. Emphasis would ensure frontline officers completed submissions to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) with accurate and timely information. Efforts were being made to improve the timeliness and quality of information shared with schools and other partners.
- TVP were working to ensure that Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) information were shared promptly with relevant partners. Strategic improvements were being explored to enhance data sharing responsibilities across agencies. Information was shared with the Berkshire West Children's Board and Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), although further work was needed to strengthen this area.
- One of the key findings from the JTAI related to the timeliness of strategy meetings. TVP had addressed internal delays, such as waiting for officers on shift, and prioritised MASH work to improve responsiveness.
- There was a recognised need to better capture the voice of the child in Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs).
- TVP had the ability to surge resources into MASH through Operation Yearn, drawing officers from other departments to meet demand. This has recently been implemented to ensure timely responses.
- While operational collaboration with children's services was improving, further work was required at the strategic partnership level, particularly in relation to the Children's Board and CSPs.

Members noted the report and acknowledged the swift and comprehensive response by the partnership. They emphasised the importance of continued focus on safeguarding, reducing caseloads, and ensuring that children's voices were heard and acted upon. The Committee also noted the transition of Children's Services back into the Council and the anticipated monitoring visits by Ofsted.

Discussions were being undertaken with the Department for Education (DfE) to finalised the improvement notices and the appointment of the DfE improvement partner which would support scrutiny and assurance to the improvement work being undertaken.

The Chair thanked the officers for the report and noted that there would be an expectation that colleagues from the Integrated Care Board, Probation Service and Thames Valley Police would attend the next update of the Joint Targeted Area Inspection.

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Resolved –

- (1) **That the findings of the Joint Targeted Area Inspection and the areas for improvement be noted;**
- (2) **That the delivery of the single and multi-agency action plans to address the findings of the inspection be noted (Appendices 1 & 2 of the report);**
- (3) **That the governance arrangements be noted (Appendices 3 & 4 of the report);**
- (4) **That a future update on the progress of the Partnership Action Plan and the impact of improvement activities be provided to the next meeting;**
- (5) **That officers from the Integrated Care Board, Probation Service and Thames Valley Police attend the future update to provide information on their areas of improvement.**

6. SEND STRATEGY 2022-2027 ANNUAL UPDATE

The Committee received a report providing an update on the delivery of the Reading partnership Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy 2022–2027 and the Reading Local Area SEND Self Evaluation Framework (SEF). The report summarised progress made on the ambitions and actions set out in the strategy and highlighted the effectiveness of the partnership in improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND and their families.

The SEND Strategy 2022–2027, launched in January 2022, was delivered through six work strands: Communications, Early Intervention through to Specialist Support, Emotional Wellbeing, Preparing for Adulthood, Short Breaks, and Local Area Inspection. Each strand was overseen by a steering group with representation from Reading Borough Council, Brighter Futures for Children, the NHS, and parents and carers.

In October 2024, a strengthened SEND Strategy Board was launched, co-chaired by the Executive Director of Children's Services and the Director of Vulnerable People at the BOB Integrated Care Board. A comprehensive self-evaluation (SEF) was completed, highlighting strengths such as the commitment to co-production, the effectiveness of the Therapeutic Thinking approach, and the expansion of specialist provision.

Key Highlights included:

- Launch of the Reading Inclusion Support in Education (RISE) service to support inclusive practice in schools.
- Improved access to early years speech and language support, with no current waiting list.
- Development of a new Emotional Health Triage model to streamline access to mental health support.

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- Strategic leadership of a Berkshire-wide neurodivergent screening transformation project.
- Expansion of supported internships and employment pathways for young people with SEND.
- Continued co-production with families and young people, including the development of a SEND Roadmap and updated Local Offer resources.

Areas for Development included:

- Continued long waiting times for ADHD and autism assessments.
- Need for improved integration and clarity in health service pathways.
- Development of a joint commissioning strategy across BFFC, RBC, and the ICB.
- Expansion of post-16 education and housing options for young people with complex needs.
- Improved data sharing and tracking of short breaks and outcomes.

The Committee noted the progress made in early years and school inclusion, and discussed the importance of addressing waiting times, transitions to adulthood, and the need for integrated commissioning.

Resolved –

- (1) **That the progress made in delivering the SEND Strategy 2022–2027 be noted;**
- (2) **That the key strengths, challenges and priorities set out in the partnership Self Evaluation Framework (SEF) be noted;**
- (3) **That the next steps to continue to deliver the 2022-2027 SEND Strategy be endorsed.**

7. AUTISM STRATEGY: YEAR 3 ACTION PLAN UPDATE

The Committee received an update on the progress made in Year 3 of the All Age Autism Strategy Action Plan across Reading. The report highlighted achievements across all seven strategic priorities and outlined the contributions of partner agencies through the Autism Partnership Board.

The Committee were informed that the Action Plan, although unfunded, had been delivered within existing resources. Progress was noted across all workstreams, including autism training, early years and education support, transitions to adulthood, employment and vocational support, healthcare, supported living, criminal justice, and family and carer support.

The report outlined the importance of inclusive education, early intervention, and the need for continued focus on transitions and post-16 support. Also noted were the challenges

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posed by budget constraints and the importance of co-production with autistic people and their families.

Members discussed the report and noted that 63% of Reading schools had received training from Award in Education and Training (AET). The Committee were informed that the aim was for all schools to receive the training but due to timetabling this had not yet been completed. It was suggested that training could be delivered in partnership with Reading University for student teachers, and this would be investigated.

Resolved - That the progress made in Year 3 (2024/2025) of the All Age Autism Strategy Action Plan be noted.

8. SUPPORTED LIVING FRAMEWORK TENDER

The Committee received a report seeking approval to commence procurement of a new Supported Living Framework to replace the current contract which expires on 31 March 2026. The report outlined the rationale for the new framework, including the need to improve quality, reduce reliance on off-framework spot purchases, and ensure the service meets the increasing complexity of needs within the borough.

The report explained that there were a total of 367 commissioned supported living packages currently in place. 83% (306 packages, 77% of annual spend) of these were under the current framework contract which consisted of 18 providers, 17 of which were active. The remaining 17% (61 packages, 23% of annual spend) were spot purchased between 28 off framework providers and were required for various reasons, for example due to the current framework providers often not being able to meet complex needs.

The new framework would be structured into three Lots to better reflect the diversity of support needs:

- Lot 1 – Supported Living (accommodation-based)
- Lot 2 – Community Support (non-accommodation-based)
- Lot 3 – Complex Needs (specialist provision)

The proposed contract would run for an initial five-year term, with the option to extend for a further five years, with an estimated total value of £150m over the full term. The framework would include standardised pricing for Lots 1 and 2, with a bespoke pricing model under development for Lot 3.

The Committee noted that the new framework would introduce:

- Minimum accommodation standards aligned with national expectations.
- A tiering system based on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to incentivise quality.
- A strategic three-year workstream to embed cultural change and promote independence.

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- Enhanced oversight of complex needs provision and a focus on reducing residential placements.

The Committee also noted that engagement work would be undertaken with individuals with lived experience and the establishment of a "Working Together Supported Living Group" to co-produce elements of the specification.

In response to questions it was noted that there was expected capacity for services to meet the demands and work would be undertaken so that the right quality, training and support was provided. There was an expectation that care packages would be reviewed to a 12 month strategy.

Resolved –

- (1) **That the Executive Director of Communities and Adult Social Care, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Adult Social Care, the Director of Finance, and the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be given delegated authority, to:**
 - **Procure and enter into a contract with successful tenderer(s) for the support/care services to be provided.**
The contract will be for up to 10 years (5 initial years and then up to 5 further years);
 - **Negotiate with the successful tenderer(s) to mobilise the contract, vary the contract, extend the contract at the appropriate time and otherwise contract manage the contract throughout its lifecycle.**

9. HOME CARE FRAMEWORK TENDER

The Committee received a report seeking approval to commence procurement of a new Home Care Framework to replace the current contract which would expire on 31 March 2026. The report outlined the rationale for the new framework, including the need to maintain market stability, support increasing demand, and ensure high-quality care provision aligned with the Care Act 2014.

The report explained that the new framework would be a single-lot contract running for an initial five-year term, with the option to extend for a further five years. The estimated total value of the contract was £127.7 million over the full term, based on an annual spend of £10.5 million with assumed inflation and demand growth.

The Committee noted that the new framework would introduce:

- A stronger focus on reablement and enablement.
- Flexibility to evolve the service over the contract lifecycle.
- Support for people with complex needs to remain at home.
- A formalised process for commissioning live-in care.
- Mandatory use of the Mosaic Provider Portal for electronic invoicing.
- A single-tiered framework with consistent quality standards.

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Engagement work would be undertaken with service users, including the establishment of a Home Care Working Together Group to co-produce elements of the specification and tender process.

In response to questions it was noted that home care framework providers were closely monitored and reviewed. Concerns about providers were addressed through quality monitoring, safeguarding teams and collaboration with other local authorities. Regarding supporting people in taking medications a piece of work was being led by the Integrated Care Board to train home care providers to support delegated tasks.

Resolved –

(1) That the Executive Director of Communities and Adult Social Care, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Adult Social Care, the Director of Finance, and the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services to be granted delegated authority to:

- **Procure and enter into a contract with the successful tenderer(s) for the support / care services to be provided. The contract will be for up to 10 years (5 initial years and then up to 5 further years).**
- **Negotiate with the successful tenderer(s) to mobilise the contract, vary the contract, extend the contract at the appropriate time, and otherwise contract manage the contract throughout its lifecycle.**

10. READING YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE ANNUAL PLAN 2025/26 AND PROGRESS ON INSPECTION IMPROVEMENT WORK

The Committee received an update on the Reading Youth Justice Service (YJS) Annual Plan for 2025/26 and progress made against the Youth Justice Service Improvement Plan following the inspection by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) in September 2024.

The report explained that the Annual Youth Justice Plan was a statutory requirement under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and a condition of the Youth Justice Board (YJB) grant. The Plan was being finalised for submission to the YJB by 30 June 2025 and would be published on the Council's website once approved. The Plan had been developed in collaboration with the multi-agency Youth Justice Management Board (YJMB), which provided oversight and strategic direction.

The report also outlined the progress made in response to the HMIP inspection, which had rated the service as inadequate. A comprehensive Improvement Plan had been developed and submitted to HMIP in December 2024. The Plan was structured around four key pillars: Governance and Leadership; Staffing and Workforce Development; Partnership and Services; and Processes, Systems and Quality of Practice.

Key highlights included:

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- 27% reduction in first-time entrants to the youth justice system in 2024/25.
- 21% reduction in the reoffending rate, with a 46.5% drop in the number of reoffences per child.
- No custodial sentences or remands to Youth Detention Accommodation in the 12 months to March 2025.
- Strengthened governance through improved performance reporting and increased partner engagement.
- Recruitment of qualified staff, including three new practitioners and ongoing workforce development.
- Implementation of new partnership initiatives such as the Act Now project and enhanced substance misuse screening.
- Development of a new Quality Assurance Framework and local performance standards.

The report noted that the strategic objectives from the 2024/25 plan would be retained for 2025/26, including reducing first-time entrants, reoffending, use of custody, ethnic disproportionality, and serious youth violence, while embedding child-first practice and improving outcomes for victims.

The Committee were informed that the service had moved to quadrant 3 of the YJB oversight framework following the inspection, indicating it was a priority service requiring improvement. However, the YJB had acknowledged the significant progress made and indicated that the service was on track to move to quadrant 2.

The Committee welcomed the report and the improvements being made since the last report. It was noted that work had been undertaken in May last year to reduce the amount of first time entrants into the system, the increase in the recruitment of professionally qualified staff and partnership working had supported the improvement work.

Resolved –

- (1) That the progress of the 2025/26 Youth Justice Service annual plan and timeframes for completion be noted;**
- (2) That the progress of the Youth Justice Service Improvement Plan be noted.**

(The meeting closed at 9.18 pm)

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Present:

Councillor Ruth McEwan (Chair)	Lead Councillor for Education and Public Health, Reading Borough Council (RBC)
Nadeem Ahmed	Clinical Director of New Reading PCN
Councillor Paul Gittings	Lead Councillor for Adult Social Care, RBC
Alice Kunjappy-Clifton	Lead Officer, Healthwatch Reading
Abid Irfan	Director of Primary Care and Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB)
Councillor Alice Mpofu-Coles	Chair of the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee, RBC
Gail Muirhead	Prevention Manager, RBFRS
Matt Pearce	Director of Public Health for Reading and West Berkshire
Rachel Spencer	Chief Executive, Reading Voluntary Action
Councillor Liz Terry	Leader of the Council, RBC
Melissa Wise	Executive Director – Community & Adult Social Care Services, RBC

Also in attendance:

Alison Foster	Programme Director, Building Berkshire Together, RBFT
Lara Fromings	Assistant Director for Transformation, Commissioning and Performance, RBC
Mary Maimo	Public Health & Wellbeing Manager, RBC
Bev Nicholson	Integration Programme Manager, RBC

Apologies:

Andy Ciecierski	Clinical Director for Caversham Primary Care Network
Councillor Wendy Griffith	Lead Councillor for Children, RBC
Colin Hudson	Reading LPA Commander, Thames Valley Police (TVP)
Steve Leonard	West Hub Group Manager, RBFRS
Lara Patel	Executive Director of Children's Services, Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC)
Ben Riley	Chief Medical Officer, BOB ICB

44. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

45. QUESTIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDER 36

The following questions were asked by Tom Lake in accordance with Standing Order 36:

a) Outputs from Boards Related to Integration

I understand that there is a joint scrutiny board for the BOB ICS. How are its proceedings and outputs made available to the residents of Reading?

Similarly, I understand that there is a Joint Integration Board or similar coordination across the boroughs of Berkshire West. How are its proceedings and outputs made available to the residents of Reading?

REPLY by the Chair of the Health & Wellbeing Board (Councillor McEwan):

READING HEALTH & WELLBEING BOARD MINUTES – 14 MARCH 2025

Thank you for your question. The proceedings for the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (BOB) Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee are published online and can be found on the [Buckinghamshire Council website](https://buckinghamshire.moderngov.co.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=1139)

(<https://buckinghamshire.moderngov.co.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=1139>)

Each Local Authority in the Berkshire West area have separate Local Integration Boards (LIB) who manage the Better Care Fund Planning and performance reporting against the BCF Metrics, as well as broader integration work across each area. The Integration Board in Reading is known as the Reading Integration Board (RIB). Whilst these are not public meetings, the Integration board does provide regular updates to the health and wellbeing board.

b) Parking at Royal Berkshire Hospital

We now hear that the Royal Berkshire Hospital replacement is unlikely to be open before 2040.

It is well attested that the parking difficulties at the Craven Road site cause a great deal of anxiety to patients. I have often seen patients in nightwear waiting on the pavement of Addington Road to be picked up. There is good public transport at the site but it is not suitable or convenient for patients in some conditions coming from some parts of the RBH catchment area.

Could the Health and Wellbeing Board, working with the RBH trust and the Reading planning directorate, elicit a practical plan for relieving the parking difficulties at the Craven Road site - which cause so much anxiety to hospital patients?

REPLY by the Chair of the Health & Wellbeing Board (Councillor McEwan):

I thank Mr Lake for his question.

The provision of parking spaces within the Royal Berkshire Hospital estate for patients and staff is principally a matter for the Hospital Trust, however the Council is committed to working with the Trust to improve access to the Hospital in its current location. In addition, the Council does manage the on-street parking spaces in roads in close proximity to the Hospital, which provide valuable parking capacity in addition to the provision at the Hospital itself. Parking restrictions and charges for these on-street spaces are carefully considered to balance the needs of patients and local residents at different times of the day, whilst also encouraging the turnover of spaces to maximise availability.

Historically, the Hospital has explored proposals to increase parking provision on the site and if the Trust wishes to revisit any such proposals they could be discussed with the Council through the usual pre-application planning process.

The location of the Hospital, within a built-up residential area with limited highway space, does pose challenges regarding access and severely limits the Council's ability to provide additional parking capacity. The Council has therefore worked with the Hospital Trust, alongside Reading Buses and Wokingham Borough

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Council, to enhance sustainable access for patients and staff through the provision of the Hospital 300 park and ride service. This runs from both Thames Valley Park and Mereoak park and ride sites, providing an alternative option to access the Hospital and the University of Reading from the east and south of Reading.

I have also received the following response from the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust:

Due to high demand for services and a challenging location, demand for parking outpaces capacity at Royal Berkshire Hospital. Over the past few years, the Trust, in conjunction with Reading Borough Council, has taken several steps to reduce parking demand including free off-site parking for staff at nearby car parks, a Park and Ride service for patients and visitors, as well as delivering more services closer to patients at its other hospital sites across Berkshire and South Oxfordshire. Despite these improvements, parking continues to be a challenge at Royal Berkshire Hospital due to difficulties increasing the number of spaces available on site. The Trust is keen to work closely with Reading Borough Council to explore how we both support patients, visitors and staff to access the hospital as well as encourage use of alternative modes of transport.

In relation to a plan, this is a matter primarily for the Hospital Trust, but there is willingness to engage on all sides. I would highlight, however, that this is a parking and transport matter so should Mr Lake wish to make further enquiries these should be raised in the first instance to the Traffic Management Sub-Committee. It should be noted that neither this Board nor the Council can compel the Hospital Trust to build a plan to manage their parking in a different way.

c) Marmot City Framework

Oxfordshire and Wokingham Borough are working together on improving health and wellbeing using the Marmot City framework. Will Reading also take up this approach and ensure that all of its departments contribute to the health of the population?

REPLY by the Chair of the Health & Wellbeing Board (Councillor McEwan):

The Board recognises that most of the factors that influence our health lie outside of the health care system, including housing, education, employment and much more.

One of the five priorities from our joint health and wellbeing strategy is to reduce the differences in health between different groups of people. To support this, there is an ambition within the strategy to develop a health in all policies approach that will deliver cross-sector action on the wider determinants of health: the social, environmental, economic and commercial conditions in which people live.

Work to develop a health in all policies approach is currently under way and the board may consider becoming a Marmot Borough as part of this programme of work, if there is evidence that it can deliver better outcomes for our population.

46. HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY QUARTERLY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN NARRATIVE AND DASHBOARD REPORT

Mary Maimo presented a report and gave a presentation which gave an overview of the implementation of the Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2030 in Reading and provided detailed information on performance and progress towards achieving the local goals and actions set out in both the overarching strategy and in the locally agreed implementation plans.

The Health and Wellbeing Implementation Plans and Dashboard Update was attached at Appendix A and contained detailed narrative updates on the actions agreed for each of the implementation plans and included the most recent update of key information in each of the following five priority areas:

- Priority 1 - Reduce the differences in health between different groups of people;
- Priority 2 - Support individuals at high risk of bad health outcomes to live healthy lives;
- Priority 3 - Help families and children in early years;
- Priority 4 - Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all children and young people;
- Priority 5 - Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all adults.

Full data for key indicators for each priority was provided in the dashboard report at Appendix B.

It was reported at the meeting that a group was being put together to lead on developing an oral health strategy for Reading and that unexpected funding of almost £27k for the supervised tooth brushing project for Reading had been announced on 14 March 2025.

Resolved – That the report and position be noted.

47. INTEGRATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

Bev Nicholson submitted a report giving an update on the Integration Programme and the performance of Reading against the national Better Care Fund (BCF) targets to December 2024 (Quarter 3) and outlining the spend against the BCF plan, including the Adult Social Care (ASC) Discharge Fund to support hospital discharges in 2024/25.

The BCF metrics had been agreed with system partners during the BCF Planning process. Outcomes, recorded at the end of December 2024 (Quarter 3), were:

- The number of avoidable admissions (unplanned hospitalisation for chronic ambulatory care) (Met)
- The number of emergency hospital admissions due to falls in people aged 65 and over, per 100,000 population (Met)
- An increase in the proportion of people discharged home using data on discharge to their usual place of residence (Met) (this was met for the Quarter but was not on track for the year)
- The number of older adults whose long-term care needs were met by admission to residential or nursing care per 100,000 population (Not Met)

Further details against each of the targets were set out in the report which demonstrated the effectiveness of the collaborative work with system partners.

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The report also covered the Better Care Fund Quarter 3 return for 2024/25, attached at Appendix 1. The Quarter 3 return had been signed off through the delegated authority process in advance of submission by the due date of 14 February 2025.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

48. BOB ICB UPDATE BRIEFING

Abid Irfan submitted a report presenting a briefing from the BOB Integrated Care Board, as at March 2025.

The report covered the following areas:

- BOB ICB Board meetings
- Community Wellness Outreach Programme
- BOB ICB Operating Model – next steps
- Working with local people and communities
- 10-Year Health plan for the NHS
- New provider for BOB non-emergency patient transport services
- BOB ICB financial position within 2024/25
- NHS Operational Planning for 2025/26 and associated national priorities
 - Priorities and operational planning guidance 2024/25
 - Development of a medium-term plan for transformation and improvement
- Joint Forward Plan refresh – timescales and engagement

The Board noted that there had been an announcement about the abolition of NHS England since the report had been written and Abid Irfan also reported that, in the last 24 hours, all ICBs had been told that they would have to cut their running costs by 50% by December 2025, so the BOB ICB operating model would probably need further review.

Resolved - That the report and position be noted.

49. BUILDING BERKSHIRE TOGETHER - UPDATE

Further to Minute 35 of the meeting held on 17 January 2025, Alison Foster gave a presentation updating the Board on the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust's (RBFT) Building Berkshire Together (BBT) project for the redevelopment of the Royal Berkshire Hospital (RBH) as part of the national New Hospital Programme (NHP). A copy of the presentation slides had been circulated with the agenda papers.

The presentation explained that the outcome of a further government review of the NHP had been announced on 20 January 2025. Following the review, the RBFT programme had been delayed further, and construction would now start between 2037-39. Funding of £2 billion or more had been allocated, indicating support for a whole new hospital on a new site. Funding for the BBT programme would cease at the end of March 2025 and would resume after 2030, so the Trust was standing the programme team down.

This change would mean the following challenges for the Trust:

- Maintaining the current estate
- Meeting increasing population demands
- Land availability for the future new hospital
- Meeting NHS Net Zero targets

The next steps were identified as:

- Securing funding for the business case for land purchase
- Master planning for the next 15 years
- Accelerating system transformation

Resolved: That the presentation be noted.

50. HEALTH WEIGHT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Nina Crispin submitted a report presenting a Reading Healthy Weight Needs Assessment for the development of a whole systems approach to healthy weight and proposing the formation of a task and finish group to oversee the development of a Healthy Weight Strategy and implementation plan. The report had appended the Healthy Weight Needs Assessment Executive Summary Report (March 2025) at Appendix 1 and the full report at Appendix 2.

The report explained that overweight and obesity were defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that may impair health. Obesity was one side of the double burden of malnutrition. Health risks related to obesity were many and well known with the WHO highlighting that overweight and obesity (and poor diet) were major risk factors for many chronic diseases, including type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease (the main cause of premature death in the UK) and some cancers, in addition to joint and mobility issues, depression, low mood and fertility issues.

Evidence suggested that a Whole Systems Approach to Healthy Weight was needed to influence changes at systems levels and policies in the areas that had an impact on the population's health. These areas of influence included social and economic conditions, food production, agriculture, environment and planning, tax and levies, education and schools, industry practice and innovation, media and advertising.

A Healthy Weight Needs Assessment had been undertaken in 2023 to better understand the needs of Reading's population regarding effective provision that promoted healthy weight. The needs assessment had interrogated the evidence-base around nutrition, physical activity and weight to better understand the health inequalities around excess weight, including wider and commercial determinants that impacted people's weight. The focus of the needs assessment had been on excess weight and reaching and maintaining a healthy weight, and the ability of the Local Authority and partners to drive and influence change. The needs assessment had identified recommendations (as set out in Appendix 1) to support systems-wide change in Reading for addressing healthy weight issues and it was proposed that the recommendations informed the development of a Whole Systems Approach to Healthy Weight in Reading, covering the life course of an individual.

The report stated that it needed to be acknowledged that working on the recommendations from the needs assessment would require prioritisation as they could not all be addressed at once. The prioritisation work would need to be driven by local needs and Council priorities.

The report proposed that a Whole Systems Approach Task and Finish Group was set up to oversee the development of a Whole Systems Approach to Healthy Weight Strategy for Reading, with all partners and professional disciplines in the system playing their part and committing to systems changes. The task and finish group membership would include representatives from the Integrated Care Board, the NHS, Transport and Planning

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Department, Voluntary Sector partners, Active Reading colleagues, Advertising Team, and colleagues from Children and Young People's services. The intention was to carry out the development work from May to October 2025, to produce an initial draft strategy in November 2025.

Due to the very low response received from the needs assessment survey targeted at educational settings (children and young people), a separate needs assessment would need to be conducted to gather insights on the pathways available to children and young people in Reading who were obese or overweight and identify recommendations to address the issue.

Resolved –

- (1) That the publication of the Healthy Weight Needs Assessment for Adults in Reading be noted;
- (2) That a whole systems approach to healthy weight for Reading and the formation of a task and finish group to oversee the development of a strategy with an implementation plan be endorsed;
- (3) That members of the Board commit to the development of the whole systems approach to healthy weight strategy by nominating representative(s) to join the task and finish group.

51. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Resolved – That the meetings of the Health and Wellbeing Board for the Municipal Year 2025/26 be held at 2.00pm on the following dates:

- 11 July 2025
- 10 October 2025
- 16 January 2026
- 13 March 2026

52. ROYAL BERKSHIRE NHS FOUNDATION TRUST INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE REPORT – INFORMATION ITEM

A web link was provided to the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust's Integrated Performance Report from December 2024.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and closed at 3.30 pm)

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Present:

Councillor Rachel Eden (Chair)	Lead Councillor for Education and Public Health, Reading Borough Council (RBC)
Andy Ciecierski	Clinical Director for Caversham Primary Care Network
Councillor Paul Gittings	Lead Councillor for Adult Social Care, RBC
Councillor Wendy Griffith	Lead Councillor for Children, RBC
Alice Kunjappy-Clifton	Lead Officer, Healthwatch Reading
Gail Muirhead	Prevention Manager, RBFRS
Matt Pearce	Director of Public Health for Reading and West Berkshire
Katie Prichard-Thomas	Chief Nursing Officer, Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust (RBFT)
Ben Riley	Chief Medical Officer, BOB ICB
Rachel Spencer	Chief Executive, Reading Voluntary Action
Councillor Liz Terry	Leader of the Council, RBC
Melissa Wise	Executive Director – Community & Adult Social Care Services, RBC
Theresa Wyles	Interim Chief Operating Officer, BHFT

Also in attendance:

Jamie Evans	Area Director, Healthwatch in Berkshire West
Lara Fromings	Assistant Director for Transformation, Commissioning and Performance, RBC

Apologies:

Colin Hudson	Reading LPA Commander, Thames Valley Police (TVP)
Steve Leonard	West Hub Group Manager, RBFRS
Lara Patel	Executive Director of Children's Services, Brighter Futures for Children (BFFC)
Helen Troalen	Interim Chief Finance Officer, RBFT

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. DELEGATED DECISIONS

The Board received the list of delegated decisions from previous meetings.

3. QUESTIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDER 36

The following question was asked by Tom Lake in accordance with Standing Order 36:

a) Virtual Hospital/Hospital at Home

The Royal Berkshire Hospital (RBH) has a well-established "Virtual Hospital" programme with sometimes over 100 patients on its pathways, being treated at home. The programme provides treatment stated to be equivalent to hospital care in the patient's home and can have significant benefits for patient and hospital trust.

But it provides no personal care, no nutrition, hydration, washing, toileting assistance, shopping or housework or cleaning, which could become impossible

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for a patient at home without a carer able to perform these functions. The services are described as hospital care at home but would be better described as hospital treatment at home.

The RBH "Virtual Acute Care Unit" covers the more acute pathways of the "Virtual Hospital" service where patients require continued monitoring at home.

The BOB ICB website states that "Hospital at Home" services in West Berkshire are delivered by RBH under the local name "Virtual Acute Care Unit" (VACU) and by Berkshire Healthcare under the name "Frailty Wards"/"Urgent Care Response" (UCR).

Berkshire Healthcare website states that their "Frailty Ward" or "Urgent Care Response" services put you under the care of either your GP or a geriatrician. But this does not cover people needing personal care who are placed in the VACU system by RBH.

RBH have stated that patients placed in the VACU service can be referred to the "Hospital at Home" service but there is no information on what that is - perhaps it is one of the Berkshire Healthcare services.

The decision to refer a patient to "Hospital at Home" for the personal care element seems to be relatively informal and I am aware of this having led to very poor experience in the past.

The VACU service can only operate safely if there is a clear protocol for decision making by staff with appropriate expertise on the need for personal care support. There is apparently a Frailty Team at the RBH but it is not automatically involved. Is the present situation satisfactory?

There is clear confusion in the various public sources of information and no single complete account for the public of how services cooperate where no carer is available at home. Can this situation be cleared up with a clear statement of how these services operate and cooperate?

(I apologise for the length of this question, but it is just the complexity and lack of clarity about these new services which gives rise to concern.)

REPLY by Katie Prichard-Thomas (Chief Nursing Officer, Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust) on behalf of the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board (Councillor Eden):

Thank you for your question and for highlighting the need for greater clarity around the scope, eligibility criteria, and coordination of services provided through the Royal Berkshire Hospital's Virtual Hospital programme, including the Virtual Acute Care Unit (VACU).

I can confirm that the Virtual Hospital service does not provide any form of personal care, including support with nutrition, hydration, washing, toileting, shopping, housework, or cleaning tasks. Our service is designed to provide clinical treatment and monitoring at home for patients who would otherwise require hospital-based care. While the term "hospital at home" is used, it is important to recognise that

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our remit is limited to medical care, not social care provision. A more accurate description may be “hospital treatment at home,” as you have noted.

To ensure patient safety and suitability for home-based care, we follow a strict referral and admission criteria. Patients referred to the Virtual Hospital must be:

- Clinically stable and appropriate for remote monitoring or treatment,
- Able to manage independently at home or have a reliable support network,
- Not reliant on assistance with personal care or basic daily living activities.

If a patient is unable to manage their personal care needs or lacks the necessary support at home, they will not meet the criteria for admission to the Virtual Hospital. In such cases, referrals would be declined, and the referring team advised to explore more appropriate care pathways.

We recognise that some patients being discharged home from the Emergency Department may present with frailty or reduced ability to manage independently. In such cases, they may be assessed by the Frailty Team prior to discharge. Where needed, support can be sought via the Urgent Community Response (UCR) service, delivered by Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. UCR may provide time-limited assistance to help individuals manage at home while other longer-term care solutions are considered. More information about the UCR service can be found here: <https://www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/our-services/physical-and-community-healthcare/urgent-community-response-service/>.

Although the Virtual Hospital team can liaise with services such as UCR when appropriate, we are not responsible for arranging or delivering personal care. It is important to understand that these services are provided by different organisations, and the pathways are distinct but complementary.

We are aware that public-facing information can sometimes cause confusion, particularly given the range of terms used (e.g., Virtual Hospital, Hospital at Home, UCR, Frailty Wards). The terminology “virtual ward” itself is not nationally standardised, which increases the risk of it being interpreted differently across the country. This contributes to inconsistency and confusion for patients, carers, and professionals alike. We agree that clearer and more accessible communication is needed to ensure patients, families, and carers understand how these services operate and interact.

Over the last month, we have launched a dedicated Virtual Hospital webpage on the Trust’s internet site, which provides patient information leaflets and a clear explanation of the Virtual Hospital service and what it offers. The page can be accessed here: <https://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/wards-and-units/virtual-acute-care-unit-vacu>. In addition, our patients are contacted directly and are provided with information from the point of admission to the Virtual Hospital to ensure they understand the service, how it operates, and what support is available. We continue to work closely with our partners across the system to improve coordination, transparency, and ensure patients are directed to the right service at the right time.

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Lastly, while I am unable to comment on individual cases, I would like to reassure you that all referrals to the Virtual Hospital (including VACU) are reviewed by clinical staff. The patient's ability to cope at home independently is a core consideration in determining suitability for the service. If it becomes apparent that the patient is unable to manage safely at home, then they may need to attend the Emergency Department, where a frailty assessment may be offered. This often helps guide appropriate ongoing care or support arrangements. However, there are occasions when patients are assessed and support is offered, but they choose to decline it. In such circumstances, we ensure the patient is fully informed of the risks and that decisions are documented appropriately.

Thank you again for raising these important points. We welcome ongoing feedback and remain committed to delivering safe, effective, and appropriately targeted care for all patients.

The following question by Francis Brown was answered in writing:

b) Is the Health and Wellbeing Strategy Quarterly Implementation Dashboard sound?

It is like a toolkit inventory. A sophisticated check list that seeks to confirm that the various action plans to support the five priorities identified in the RBC Health and Wellbeing Strategy are present. Each action is updated every three months with a status of green amber or red. The wording of the actions has been honed over time to improve the chances that the entire strategy will be delivered on time. Indeed, the development of a dashboard is an essential step on the pathway to delivering the strategy. The completeness of this large tool kit is not questioned. The timeliness of the metrics for each action is its potential weakness.

Two worrying observations:

- 1 The commentary clarifies the scope of each action and the identity of the associated partners. The text is invariably qualitative but never quantitative.
2. In the Jan 2025 report the text is supported in Appendix A by 50 charts. In more than half of these the latest data is for the year 22/23 or earlier. These data series are helpful in identifying relevant historic trends. However, they are of little relevance as dashboard indicators. The feedback loop is far too long.

These two observations challenge the integrity of the dashboard which currently shows the majority of the dashboard ratings as green. To continue with the analogy: we have the tools (the actions) but we will not know (in some cases for years) if the tools are being used effectively and efficiently. It may be a while before it is realised that the desired strategy is not on track for delivery. This is very risky.

The completeness of this large tool kit (of actions) is not questioned. The lack of timely and meaningful dashboard metrics is questioned.

- Does the Board commend the progress so far but share my concerns?

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To make a second analogy: a grower is interested in the overall yield, every step of the way losses can be expected. A proportion of seeds germinate, a proportion will show two leaves and so on. These are timely “proxy” measures. Each wave of sowings can be progressively assessed. The probability of achieving the seasons target becomes clearer as time progresses.

- Does the Board feel that using proxy measures would increase the probability of a timely delivery of the strategy?

REPLY by the Chair of the Health & Wellbeing Board (Councillor Eden):

Thank you for this well-timed question. You raise important points including about the timeliness of the measures in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy dashboard.

You are right that there is a risk of measures becoming meaningless because they are dependent on outcomes that are measured with an unavoidable time lag. This is part of the conflict between ensuring the level of quality to identify trends over time, and promptness for monitoring purposes. You are also right to ask about the potential imbalance between the use of quantitative and qualitative data.

There are a range of ways the board could do this, including proxy measures as you suggest.

It is important to ensure that we are using our scarce resources most effectively to achieve the outcomes that are our priorities.

This is not easy and in some of the priority areas within the strategy it is particularly difficult. This may partly explain your observation about an apparent dependence upon qualitative data.

As you know, the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Reading is the responsibility of the Health and Wellbeing Board and this problem has been recognised by the board.

Our Director of Public Health and his team have been taking action to address this by engaging the Local Government Association to conduct an independent review of the Reading Health and Wellbeing Board over the past six months.

The review interviewed board members and held workshops with stakeholders to develop a shared view of the role, purpose and priorities of the Board, to consider best practice and new ways of working that will drive action and impact.

We will be discussing their recommendations at this meeting and I hope you will be able to stay to listen to this discussion, but I would certainly encourage you to take a look at the report.

One of the recommendations was a desire for the board to reduce the number of priorities which they wish to focus on.

A ‘rapid’ Joint Strategic Needs Assessment is being undertaken that will come to the next Health and Wellbeing Board meeting to inform our key priorities.

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As well as informing the work of the health system locally it will also give us an opportunity to identify the most valid indicators so that our dashboard can be most useful. I also hope that we will be able to refresh the way our board works to be more dynamic and responsive to the needs of our town.

4. REVIEW OF THE READING HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Matt Pearce submitted a report presenting the findings of the Local Government Association (LGA) review of the Reading Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) and setting out proposals for how the Board could revise its governance arrangements and working practices in response to the feedback received. The LGA feedback was attached at Appendix A to the report.

The report explained that, further to the Board's decision on 11 October 2024 to undertake a review (Minute 22 refers), the LGA had been invited to carry out a review of the Health and Wellbeing Board's governance and working practices to evaluate its effectiveness in improving the health and wellbeing of the local population and reducing health inequalities and make recommendations for improvement. The LGA had undertaken interviews with HWB Members and other stakeholders between December 2024 and February 2025. The intelligence gathered in those conversations had then been triangulated and compared with best practice and understanding of what made for an effective HWB. A workshop had been held on 24 March 2025 for the LGA to provide feedback and for HWB Members to reflect on the findings. The report summarised the main points raised at the workshop.

A Task and Finish Group had been set up to consider the outputs from the workshop and to develop a plan setting out the steps that the Board could take in response to the feedback received. The Task and Finish Group's recommendations had formed the basis for the proposals set out at paragraph 4.1 in the report, as follows:

- A Health and Wellbeing Board Compact would be developed that defined the shared principles and jointly set expectations for how Reading Health and Wellbeing Board members would work collectively as a strategic partnership to drive meaningful action and achieve the vision of its Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- It was proposed to move from four formal HWB meetings per year to three – these would be in-person and relatively brief, being focused on reports where formal decisions were required.
- Given that the HWB was a committee of the Council, meetings would be required to take place in public, with publication of formal agendas and minutes. It was proposed that members of the public would still be able to ask formal questions, but meetings would not be live-streamed. Alternative meeting venues would be explored, to address concerns about the formality of the Council Chamber, but any venue would need to have sufficient capacity and be accessible to the public.
- Formal HWB meetings would be followed by informal strategic meetings focused on the 'plan–do–review' cycle in relation to agreed priorities, and on the efficacy of partnership working arrangements.
- In addition, there would be informal deep-dive workshops in between HWB meetings, which would bring in additional partners and stakeholders – these would be focused on discussing barriers and challenges related to the agreed priorities,

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sharing best practice and building on evidence-based approaches, as well as seeking to develop innovative solutions.

- The JSNA (State of the Borough Report) would be updated and brought back to the October HWB meeting – this would be used to identify a small list of priorities which the board wished to focus on.
- Once the priorities were agreed, subgroups would be established and tasked with developing a implementation plan which would be brought back to the March meeting (or earlier if possible).
- There would be a focus on raising the public profile of the Board, including:
 - A regular newsletter for stakeholders (and possibly residents)
 - Improving online information provision about the Board, including an interactive version of the performance dashboard and links to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment, and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy/implementation plan.
 - An annual conference to update stakeholders and residents on the previous year's activities, and priorities for the coming year, including workshop sessions.

The report stated that officers would work on the proposals and bring further details of any amendments needed to the HWB's Terms of Reference and operational arrangements to a future meeting for formal decision, informed by the new priorities of the Board.

The report also stated that one of the findings from the review had been confusion about the roles of and difference between the HWB and the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education (ACE) Committee in its role as the Council's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and the report set out guidance to inform how each committee would operate and how the scope of their agendas would be determined, as well as a table summarising the key differences between them.

The report noted that the NHS 10 Year Plan that had been published on 4 July 2025 would need to be considered alongside the proposals in the report. In particular, the 10 Year Plan outlined future conversations between the LGA and the Government regarding democratic oversight and accountability within the new NHS operating model and the role of mayors and reforms of local government. The new plan also stated that a neighbourhood health plan would be developed under the leadership of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Resolved –

That the proposed changes to the Health and Wellbeing Board following the LGA Review, as set out in paragraph 4.1 of the report, be approved.

5. JOINT STRATEGIC NEEDS ASSESSMENT REVIEW

Matt Pearce submitted a report on the process and timeline for reviewing and refreshing the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) in Reading, a key shared intelligence resource that enabled the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) and its partners to understand local population needs and informed strategic decision-making.

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The report explained that the current JSNA, hosted on the [Reading Observatory](#), included a wide range of thematic needs assessments and data. However, upon a public health self-assessment using the LGA Strengths and Risk tool, issues and opportunities relating to the JSNA had been identified and discussed, highlighting the need for improvement to ensure the JSNA was fit for purpose.

The recent LGA review of the Health and Wellbeing Board had identified a desire by board members to focus on a smaller number of priorities that were informed by evidence of need. A relatively short overview of the key health needs of Reading would be produced using data and intelligence that was readily available. This would be reviewed by HWB members in a workshop in the autumn to inform decisions about the Board's priorities for action in the short to medium term.

The report proposed an approach combining the delivery of this rapid "State of the Borough" JSNA, in parallel with conducting a broader review of the JSNA's structure, content, and delivery model. The latter process would run until October 2025 and involve cross-sector collaboration, including the formation of a Steering Group, stakeholder workshops, and a survey to inform development.

A further report including the outcomes of the review and an updated State of the Borough JSNA, would be brought back to the Board later in the year.

Resolved –

- (1) That the production of a rapid "State of the Borough" JSNA, in parallel with conducting a review of the current JSNA, be approved;
- (2) That the members of the Board commit to actively supporting the JSNA review process;
- (3) That the HWB partners identify and nominate suitable representatives from their organisations to participate in the JSNA Steering Group.

6. HEALTHWATCH READING ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25 – UNLOCKING THE POWER OF PEOPLE-DRIVEN CARE

Alice Kunjappy-Clifton submitted the 2024/25 Annual Report for Healthwatch Reading "Unlocking the Power of People-Driven Care" which gave details of the work carried out by Healthwatch Reading in 2024/25.

The report explained who Healthwatch Reading were and how they had: made a difference during the year; worked together for change; made a difference in the community; listed to people's experiences; heard from all communities; provided information and signposting and showcased volunteer impact.

The report gave details of Healthwatch Reading's full and diverse engagement programme in 2024/25, centred around the following core projects:

- Language Matters
- NHS Eligibility to Treatment
- GP Access
- Improving Sexual Health Awareness and Services for Young Women (16-24)
- Oral Health and Dentistry (Core20Plus5 project)

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The report also gave details of Healthwatch Reading's 2024/25 finances and set out its priorities for 2025/26:

- Primary Care
- Women's Health
- Men as Carers

Alice Kunjappy-Clifton and Jamie Evans explained that, whilst there had been recent national announcements about the abolition of Healthwatch, Healthwatch England's functions would be moved into the Department of Health and Social Care, and Healthwatch Reading would be continuing with its work until legislation had been passed, which was not expected to be for at least another 12-18 months. Members of the Board expressed gratitude for the valuable work of Healthwatch and noted its importance in providing an independent public and community voice and scrutiny, and the need to replace this work in future following the legislative changes.

Resolved - That the report and position be noted.

7. AUTISM STRATEGY YEAR 3 (2024/25) ACTION PLAN UPDATE

The Board received an information report on the progress of the Year 3 (2024/25) All Age Autism Strategy Action Plan across Reading.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

8. BOB ICB UPDATE BRIEFING

The Board received a briefing note from the BOB Integrated Care Board, as at June 2025.

The report covered the following areas:

- BOB ICB Board meetings
- BOB ICB Capital Resource Use Plan 25/26
- Update on Key Priorities
- Urgent Dental Appointments

Resolved - That the report be noted.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and closed at 2.57 pm)

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Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee



Reading
Borough Council

Working better with you

15 October 2025

Title	Joint Targeted Area Inspection Progress
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Lara Patel, Executive Director Children's Services
Report author	Lisa James – Interim Director Transformation, Improvement and QA
Lead Councillor	Cllr Wendy Griffith, Lead Councillor for Children
Council priority	Safeguard & support the health & wellbeing of Reading's adults & children
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To note progress in the delivery of the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) Partnership Action Plan (Appendix 1).

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. A Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) took place in Reading from 24 February to 14 March 2025. It was an inspection of the partnership, carried out by inspectors from Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP). The outcome of this inspection was reported to ACE Committee on the 2nd July 2025. The July paper outlined the findings of the inspection and shared Brighter Futures for Children's Single Agency plan alongside the Partnership JTAI plan which has now been submitted to Ofsted. ACE Committee were recommended to note the inspection findings and Committee requested that progress updates be presented by the partnership.
- 1.2. This JTAI focused on the multi-agency response to unborn children and children aged 0 to 7 years who are victims of domestic abuse. Inspectors' evaluation of strategic arrangements in Reading considered the multi-agency response to children of all ages.
- 1.3. JTAI's are ungraded partnership inspections that result in a letter identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Ofsted guidance sets out that this can include an area of priority action if inspectors '*identify a serious weakness that is placing children at risk of inadequate protection or significant harm.*'
- 1.4. The findings of the inspection were [published](#) on 6 May 2025.
- 1.5. The final letter included the following Areas of Priority Action for the partnership:

Inconsistent information-sharing between partners resulting in delays for children, poor-quality risk assessments that fail to address the experiences and needs of children and often weak decision-making for children.
- 1.6. As a consequence of receiving Areas of Priority Action, an Improvement Notice was issued to RBC on 31st July 2025 [Improvement notice issued to Reading Borough Council: July 2025 -](#)

[GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) and a DfE Improvement Advisor was appointed to oversee the partnership's progress against the areas of improvement.

- 1.7. Decisive action was taken by the partnership during the JTAI, whereby both multi and single agency action plans were implemented at pace to address child level, operational and strategic areas of weakness.
- 1.8. The Partnership Action Plan in response to the findings was submitted to Ofsted on 7th August 2025 as required (Appendix 1).
- 1.9. Over 85% of actions are completed or in progress for both plans. Governance and scrutiny of both the single and multi-agency action plans is now well embedded.
- 1.10. Progress against the action plans includes a significant improvement in the timeliness of practice to safeguard children, including strategy meetings and visits. Expectations regarding both compliance and quality of practice have been established across the partnership through workshops and the reissuing of guidance and procedures. Escalation processes are now well understood, with evidence of escalations taking place and having a positive impact on practice across the partnership. An assessment service has been established in BFFC, in consultation with staff, to improve the quality and timeliness of assessment and to reduce workloads across social workers to strengthen practice.
- 1.11. This has been achieved within the context of high numbers of children open to children's social care and on a Child Protection Plan.
- 1.12. The impact of improved compliance on outcomes for children will be evaluated through the partnership audit on domestic abuse due to conclude by the end of September and through ongoing scrutiny by the DfE Improvement Advisor and forthcoming monitoring visits by Ofsted.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. Incorporated on 5 April 2018 and operational since 3 December 2018, Brighter Futures for Children (BFFC), a company limited by guarantee, delivers children's services on behalf of Reading Borough Council (RBC). The company is wholly owned by but independent of the Council and is governed by an independent Board to ensure operational autonomy.
- 2.2. Following the JTAI of the multi-agency response to children in Reading who are victims of domestic abuse, the Department for Education (DfE) issued a non-statutory Improvement Notice to the Council and appointed a DfE Improvement Advisor. Monitoring visits by Ofsted will commence in November and will take place approximately every 4 months until the next full inspection of children's services (ILACS) which is due in spring 2027.
- 2.3. The DfE Improvement Advisor sits on the Brighter Futures for Children's Quality Assurance and Improvement Committee, which is to be replaced by an independently chaired RBC Children's Services Improvement Board following the transfer of Children's Service back to the Council on the 1st October 2025.

3. Progress to date

- 3.1. Comprehensive and robust single and multi-agency action plans have been implemented, with over 85% of actions completed or in progress for both plans. Governance and scrutiny of both the single and multi-agency action plans are now well embedded.
- 3.2. Progress against the action plans includes a significant improvement in the timeliness of practice to safeguard children, including strategy meetings and visits. Expectations regarding both compliance and quality of practice have been established across the partnership through workshops and the reissuing of guidance and procedures. Escalation processes are now well understood, with evidence of escalations taking place and having a positive impact on the timeliness of practice across the partnership. (See appendix 2).
- 3.3. Critical to the success of the JTAI Action Plan was a functional change made to the Together for Families Service, which meant separating out the function of assessment and thus creating an Integrated Assessment Service aligned with children's services front door. The aim of this

change was to create manageable workloads, to improve the quality and timeliness of assessment and to reduce workloads across social workers, in turn strengthening practice. This was done in collaboration and consultation with staff and the new Integrated Assessment Service launched on the 1st September 2025.

- 3.4. The above has been achieved within the context of high numbers of children open to children's social care and on a Child Protection Plan.
- 3.5. The impact of improved compliance on outcomes for children will be evaluated through the partnership audit on domestic abuse due to report findings in October and through ongoing scrutiny by the DfE Improvement Advisor and forthcoming monitoring visits by Ofsted, the first of which will take place in November and focus on the front door.
- 3.6. Brighter Futures for Children's **single agency rapid improvement action plan** is 92% complete. With 44 of the 48 actions completed, the final four are in progress and will be absorbed into the second phase of Rapid Improvement Planning.
- 3.7. The Rapid Improvement Plan has seen the successful conclusion of two Together for Families staff consultations (Family Support Workers working with Children in Need and the establishment of an Assessment Service) and improved timeliness for children in need of protection (our focus area for development) meaning more children are seen and heard.
- 3.8. The improvement to key performance indicators is the best reported in the last 12 months for our focused areas of practice. Strategy meeting timeliness is now vastly improved, consistently above 95% with most weeks reporting 100% timeliness. This significant change is a result of targeted work to reset with partners and our own managers' child centred expectations. Child Protection Visits and ICPC Timeliness are the highest they have been in 12 months and exceeding milestone targets. Whilst this is a point of celebration, what is most important is that this change is sustained and maintained. This change means that focus can now shift to the quality and impact of our service delivery.
- 3.9. To support improved compliance and quality of practice, the QA Framework and Programme have been reviewed, these along with revised Practice Standards were relaunched in July 2025. Workshops have been delivered to staff groups; Practice Corner a new addition to our weekly newsletter has been launched to keep staff up to date with developments in this area and our newly appointed Principal Social Worker is rolling a Foundations of Practice programme.
- 3.10. A new performance framework is now established, supported by a new and improved PowerBi Dashboard. This new framework and reporting is proving effective in the timely identification of priority areas of focus, enabling improvement work to be targeted in the right areas at pace and improving outcomes for children and cross directorate learning.
- 3.11. To ensure management grip and oversight, a single escalation tracker has been introduced and is reviewed weekly by the Director of Transformation, Improvement and QA (interim) with service leads to ensure escalations are responded to in a timely way and that themes and learning is captured and fed back into work to strengthen practice. This is helping to address a culture where individuals had stopped or were reluctant to raise practice concerns, masking some the issues identified in the JTAI.
- 3.12. Workloads for social workers has remained too high. This remains a critical risk area for workforce sustainability and quality of practice. Transition to the new operating model went live on 1st September 2025. This was an intentional move to separate out assessment and longer-term work, following feedback from staff who cited this as the most effective way to reduce workloads and improve the quality and timeliness of practice. From the 1st September there was a period of 3 weeks where the Together for Families teams did not receive any new work, during which time workloads have started to reduce.
- 3.13. The above has been achieved during a time where the total number of children open to social care has increased by 15% year-on-year, with a 48% rise in Child Protection Plans over the past 12 months (August 2024 – August 2025), meaning the service is working with the highest number of children open and the highest number of children on Child Protection Plans. This sharp escalation, particularly in Child Protection Plans, places our rate significantly above both

Statistical Neighbours (SNs) and national benchmarks, indicating a potential shift in threshold application or increased complexity in presenting needs. To address this a review of Child Protection Plans has been undertaken, alongside strengthening triage in the front door. A targeted learning and development plan will be set in place over the autumn term, and this will include training on Thresholds.

- 3.14. The Rapid Improvement Plan laid the essential groundwork for Children's Social Care, enabling further improvements, driving efficiencies, and supporting performance reporting. Improvement in Children's Social Care is an ongoing journey. Sustainable change will take time to introduce, deliver, and embed. Phased improvement plans will be introduced quarterly to identify and address areas for change.
- 3.15. The next iteration of improvement plan for phase 2 has been drafted across the eight focus areas with an emphasis on strengthening the quality of practice.

Priority Area
1. Timeliness of strategy meetings
2. Children being seen regularly
3. Safety plans
4. Timeliness of s47 child protection investigations and single assessments
5. Timeliness of Initial Child Protection Conferences
6. Timeliness of Core Groups
7. Regular high-quality case supervision and management oversight
8. Timeliness of Care Proceedings

- 3.16. Learning and actions have been identified through QA reports completed between June and August, and a whole staff workshop was held on 4th September. Actions from the reports and workshop will be delivered through phase two of the Improvement Plan. A meeting with Heads of Service on 30th September will determine the appropriate allocation for each action and the next phase of the Improvement Plan will be launched on the 1st October.
- 3.17. The actions in the **multi-agency JTAI Improvement Plan** are 86% complete and in progress. The Strategic Partnership Meetings have been reduced by DfE Advisor to monthly from October in recognition of progress made with Partnership Operational Group continuing to meet fortnightly to drive the plan.
- 3.17.1. Multi-agency safety planning has been established as a practice standard. Clear expectations have been set in respect to child-centred and individual safety plans as an outcome of strategy meetings and are now in place across the partnership, with a positive impact on outcomes for children being seen in the much-improved timeliness of convening Strategy Meetings.
- 3.17.2. Multi-agency workshops to socialise and embed practice expectations have taken place across June and July, with more planned for the autumn term.
- 3.17.3. The infrastructure to support driving the partnership JTAI plan and mechanisms to flag risk and evaluate progress bi-weekly are in place.

- 3.17.4. An independent review of the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership Board has been commissioned and concluded. The findings, recommendations and action plan were presented to the Reading Community Safety Partnership in September.
- 3.17.5. The Children's Task and Finish Group, reporting to the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership Board has been reconfigured and a new Terms of Reference agreed. The Task and Finish Group will lead the delivery of the Berkshire West Safeguarding Partnership (BWSCP) Priority to Safeguard Children from Domestic Abuse and will report to both the BWSCP and the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership Board (which reports into the CSP).
- 3.17.6. A partnership domestic abuse audit approach and audit template has been developed, with the partnership audit on domestic abuse taking place on 3rd September, concluding with a partnership panel day to review findings and agree actions on 29th September 2025.

3.17.7. With regards to the multi-agency JTAI Improvement Plan the following work is in progress:

- 3.17.8. Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) joint training with TVP is scheduled and staff have been identified to attend
- 3.17.9. The peer review of BFFC Children's Single Point of Access (CSPoA) by Kent Children's Services (as a Sector Led Improvement Partner) to assess effectiveness of CSPoA is due to conclude in October 2025.
- 3.17.10. The consolidation of partnership data and quality assurance to strengthen safeguarding is underway to be approved by the Partnership Improvement Strategic Group by the end of October 2025.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1. The Council Plan has established five priorities for the years 2025/28. The priorities that response to the inspection findings contribute to are:
 - Promote more equal communities in Reading
 - Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children
 - Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future
- 4.2. In delivering these priorities, we will be guided by the following set of principles:
 - Putting residents first
 - Building on strong foundations
 - Recognising, respecting, and nurturing all our diverse communities
 - Involving, collaborating, and empowering residents
 - Being proudly ambitious for Reading

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 5.1. None.

6. Community Engagement

- 6.1. Ofsted spoke to children and families impacted by domestic abuse and other agencies providing services to Reading's children and families as part of the inspection process. This included providers of specialist domestic abuse services across Reading.
- 6.2. To fully assess the impact of the improvement work underway, children and their families are engaged both to understand their views on the work we are undertaking to improve services and to hear from them on their experience of receiving our services. We hear the voice of children and their families in all of the work that we do from answering the phone in the front door, to our social work visits, children attending their child protection conferences and through more organised participation work and activities. Hearing from children and families is also a core part of our quality assurance programme. What we are hearing from our children about their experience of services is reported to a monthly performance meeting chaired by the Executive Director of Children's Services and attended by managers across children's services care, this then informs our improvement plans and strategic thinking.

7. Equality Implications

7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is not required as the report itself does not have a differential impact on people with protected characteristics these are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (gender) or sexual orientation. However, it is important to recognise the intersectionality between protected characteristics and domestic abuse and the impact on children. This includes care experienced young people, a protected characteristic in Reading.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

8.1. None noted

9. Legal Implications

9.1. If an area for priority action is relevant to the local authority, the inspection framework requires Ofsted to inform the Department for Education (DfE). Following Ofsted informing the DfE, it has indicated that it will issue a non-statutory Improvement Notice to the Council, followed by the appointment of a DfE Improvement Advisor.

9.2. Non-statutory intervention includes: the provision of external consultancy, advisory or peer support, often from another council; the establishment of improvement boards (with or without an independent chair); enhanced monitoring and challenge; and the issuing of non-statutory Improvement Notices which have often been used to underpin a package of intervention (made up of some or all of the above). The Council has powers to establish an Improvement Board and appoint an Independent Chair under the General Power of Competence (Localism Act 2011). As the Improvement Board will be comprised of officers, councillors, and independent persons, it cannot be a formal Committee or Sub-Committee of the Council (section 101 Local Government Act 1972). This means that the Improvement Board is advisory and assists the executive powers of the Council, through the powers delegated to the Executive Director, and the political and scrutiny powers of the Council, through the powers delegated to Policy Committee and the ACE Committee (Adults, Social Care and Education Committee).

9.3. The Council is in the process of setting up an Improvement Board, a Council requirement of the decision to transition Children's Services back into the Council. A report recommending the Terms of Reference and appointment process for an Independent Chair was presented to Council in June. The Independent Chair of the Board has been appointed and the DfE Improvement Advisor will be a member of the Improvement Board.

9.4. These legal implications have been agreed by Michael Graham, Monitoring Officer.

9.5. Financial Implications

10.1 A resource request for £804,730 was made to the Company and the Council to support the rapid improvement plan for a period of 6 months. This resource included, additional support for case management systems, additional front line practitioners and an improvement lead. These posts have now been filled. Funding was allocated from children's services reserves, grant funding and RBC's Delivery Fund.

10. Timetable for Implementation

10.1. The Children's Services Single Agency Rapid Improvement Plan concluded on 8th September 2025, with 44 of the 48 actions completed to date. The remaining actions have been

incorporated into Service Plans for ongoing monitoring and improvement or progressed as part of the next phase of enhancements within Children's Services.

10.2. The joint agency plan will continue to be overseen by the Partnership Improvement Group, chaired by the DfE Improvement Advisor.

10.3. Progress will be assessed through a monitoring visit by Ofsted in November 2025.

11. Background Papers

11.1. None.

Appendix Two

Key Performance Indicators (Monthly)		Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25
Strategy Meeting Timeliness							
Strategy Meetings - held within 24 hours				49%	32%	85%	87%
Strategy Meetings - held within 1 working day				72%	60%	98%	96%
Number of strategy discussions held in period	181	113	140	204	168	103	
Police involvement	99%	100%	100%	98%	100%	100%	
Health involvement	82%	88%	79%	78%	89%	100%	
Timeliness of ICPCs							
ICPCs held within 15 days from a strategy discussion		60%	64%	58%	83%	40%	76%
Number of ICPCs held in month	45	53	43	42	53	21	
Domestic Abuse	In development						

Joint Targeted Area Inspection: Reading

Multi-Agency Improvement Plan

Area for priority action:

Improvement Objectives - SUMMARY

SUMMARY OF CHANGE REQUIRED

The JTAI identified the following areas of improvement, this plans list the actions that will contribute to one of more of these areas under each theme:

1. *The voice and experience of individual children exposed to domestic abuse, so they are listened to and acted on by practitioners across the partnership.*
2. *Strategy meetings and other safeguarding meetings involving children should involve all relevant partners and happen in a timely manner.*
3. *Issues with timely and consistent information sharing relating to risk, needs and plans for children.*
4. *Understanding of threshold of need across the partnership to meet the children's needs.*
5. *Consideration of the cumulative impact of repeated experience of domestic abuse and cumulative impact on the child.*
6. *Children's safeguarding partnership use and insight of detailed and relevant data to help understand the impact on children who are victims of domestic abuse.*
7. ~~*Commissioning of support services for children and families.*~~
8. ~~*Oversight and effectiveness of MARAC arrangements.*~~
9. ~~*Ensuring effective challenge and escalation when an appropriate response is not received.*~~
10. *Strategic governance arrangements to ensure they are aligned with other partnerships for children who are victims of domestic abuse.*

Characteristics of good:

Children's voices are clearly articulated and their lived experience of domestic abuse and its impact is well understood. This understanding, informed by a comprehensive local problem profile, informs operational and strategic responses to domestic abuse that are delivered to a high standard across the local partnership in a coordinated way. Risk management, safeguarding thresholds and responses are well understood by all agencies and where issues arise/standards are not met, partners adopt a solution focused, collaborative approach to problem-solving which includes the appropriate & timely use of formal escalation processes. MASA priorities are child focused and progress against outcomes is informed by a partnership data set. MASA governance is aligned across other partnerships, including those where children are not the sole focus.

Key - Action

Blue	Completed
Green	On track
Amber	Emerging possibility that action will not be completed on time, attention needed
Red	Highly likely action will not be completed on time, urgent action needed

Key - Impact

Green	Positive impact
Amber	Moderate impact, or mechanisms to measure impact are in place but data is not yet available.
Red	No or limited impact, or no mechanisms in place to measure impact.

10th September 2025

Ref	Objectives and actions	Complete by	Owners	Progress RAG	Impact RAG	Evidence	Comments
Improvement Objective 1: VOICE AND EXPERIENCE OF INDIVIDUAL CHILDREN							
1.1	MULTI-AGENCY: ABE Interviewing with police is in place – to upskill social workers and police officers when undertaking Sect 47 enquiries.	31.05.2025	Police and CSC	Green	Amber	Training has been scheduled; awaiting confirmation on delivery dates.	Impact will be assessed from the next ABE cycle. Proposed approach includes QA of ABE interviews and dip sampling, commencing from September. Progress RAG changed to Green as training is still underway.
1.2	MULTI-AGENCY: All partners across the Reading partnership can evidence that they collectively listen to the voices of children who have been exposed to domestic abuse, and understand their lived experiences, and then act on that evidence.	30.09.2025	BWSCP DSP	Green	Red	Multi-agency domestic abuse audit to be held Sept 2025 to include voice of the child.	Current guidance and training across partner agencies regarding voice of the child as evidence for this action. Completion date changed on 16/7 from June to Sept to reflect m/a audit date. No impact measurement has taken place yet, hence red RAG rating.
1.3	MULTI-AGENCY: Undertake a multi-agency audit of domestic abuse that includes hearing the voice and understanding the experience of children	30.09.2025	BWSCP DSP	Green	Red	Multi-agency domestic abuse audit to be held Sept 2025 to include voice of the child.	This action is aligned to BWSCP Priority 3 action plan. No impact measurement has taken place yet, hence red RAG rating. NB: Linked to MARAC objective 8.1.
Improvement Objective 2: STRATEGY MEETINGS							
2.1	MULTI-AGENCY: Multi-agency safety planning as practice standard: Clear expectations to be set in respect to child-centred and individual safety plans as an outcome of strategy meetings; when a strategy meeting is not in place within 1 working day and before an ICPC.	31.07.2025	BFfC Service Manager for IROs & CP Chairs with Partners	Blue	Amber	Progress - process confirmed and shared; multi-agency training workshops held June 2025.	Safety planning audit held July 2025 (dip sample - BFfC led). Sept 2025 multi-agency domestic abuse audit to include safety planning. Limited impact measurement to date - currently showing improved practice but needs to be demonstrated over time, hence amber RAG rating
2.2	MULTI-AGENCY: Multi-agency workshop to socialise and embed practice expectations. Any delay to be escalated in line with the BWSCP procedure and a log to be kept that is reported on at the MASH Operational Group and escalated to the Berkshire West MASH Strategic Oversight Group.	30.06.2025	BFfC Service Manager for IROs & CP Chairs with Partners	Blue	Amber	Workshops held during June - well attended and positive feedback from partners attending. Strategy discussion tracker discussed at both operational and strategic JTAI groups.	To be part of highlight reporting, and risk log as required. Sept 2025 audit to be part of impact measure. Limited impact measurement to date - currently showing improved practice but needs to be demonstrated over time, hence amber RAG rating
2.3	MULTI-AGENCY: Peer Review in BFfC Children's Single Point of Access (CSPoA) being undertaken by Kent to assess effectiveness of CSPoA – this will be informed by all JTAI findings, including a focus on strategy meetings.	31.10.2025	Partnership and Kent CC	Green	Amber	40 working days have been secured from Kent to peer review with a focus on quality assurance for front door services, strategy meetings, and assessment service changes, with a recommendation for some support for the TfF part of the service. The subsequent JTAI inspection and creation of the Assessment service means the peer review is scheduled for completion for October 2025.	The peer review has been extended to October 2025. Impact updated 27/08 to reflect review plan is in place and on track
2.4	MULTI-AGENCY: Checklists to be in place to ensure all professionals involved with a child, or significant adults involved with the child, are considered at strategy meetings. In CSPoA, to provide reassurance that Probation is contacted to check their involvement with an adult, as routine practice. This to be confirmed through a dip sample of cases that came in over April/May and to feedback to the monitoring group mid May 2025.	15.05.2025	BFfC CSPoA Service Manager	Blue	Amber	Attendees reviewed as part of strat discussion processes, no concerns about lack of invitations noted. June 2025 dip sample audit of strategy discussions confirmed partner attendance, information sharing and contribution is good. Underway limited evidence of impact to date.	Need further audit / QA to ensure practice is embedded and of consistently good quality. Will be part of Sept 2025 audit. Limited impact measurement to date - currently showing improved practice but needs to be demonstrated over time, hence amber RAG rating.
2.5	MULTI-AGENCY: MASH practitioners to ensure that the recommendation for a strategy meeting made to the Assessment Team is more robust with clear timescales to minimise drift and the impact of cumulative delays upon a child and family.	30.05.2025	BFfC CSPoA Service Manager	Blue	Amber	Process clarified and shared, working well.	Need further audit / QA to ensure practice is embedded and of consistently good quality. Will be part of Sept 2025 audit. Limited impact measurement to date - currently showing improved practice but needs to be demonstrated over time, hence amber RAG rating.
Improvement Objective 3: INFORMATION SHARING							
3.1	MULTI-AGENCY: Multi-agency practice expectations to be discussed, socialised and embedded through a workshop to address practice relating to: - Improving the safeguarding notification processes and develop effective and timely information sharing with all partners, especially GPs. - Ensure communication and co-ordination at the earliest opportunity when information becomes known about children in different households linked to the same adults and associated risks. - Capture the voice of the child, wishes, feelings and lived experiences as standard by all agencies - Distribute and socialise the consistent and informed use of DASH forms in all agencies to provide consistent benchmarking of risk. Health to ensure DASH form is completed, and risks known by HV and GP around DA to be shared with their service even if the pregnant mother does not disclose this.	30.06.25	BFfC QA Lead	Blue	Amber	Workshops held in June 2025 covered practice expectations including information sharing, strategy discussions, safety planning and professional meetings. Health colleagues tracking DASH forms as part of their QA.	Will be part of Sept 2025 audit. Limited impact measurement to date - currently showing improved practice but needs to be demonstrated over time, hence amber RAG rating.
3.2	MULTI-AGENCY: Audit the quality, consistency and timeliness of information-sharing between the partner agencies involved in safeguarding children and domestic abuse.	30.07.2025	BWSCP	Green	Amber	Dip sample audit held in June 2025.	Will be part of Sept 2025 audit, on track to be completed
Improvement Objective 4: THRESHOLD OF NEED							

Ref	Objectives and actions	Complete by	Owners	Progress RAG	Impact RAG	Evidence	Comments
4.1	Multi-agency: Action is taken to consider how well thresholds of need are understood in the context of disputes and escalations across the partnership to meet children's needs and minimise risks.	30.05.2025	BFfC CSPoA Service Manager	Blue	Green	Escalation policies are being mapped across the partnership to ensure consistency and alignment. The BWSCP Escalation Policy has been re-circulated to partners for reference. An escalation tracker has been introduced within BFfC to mitigate the risk of drift or delay. While current positive insights are anecdotal, formal evidence will be available from September.	Formal review of escalation tracker will be included in the September 2025 audit. There is robust oversight of the escalation policy and tracker, with improved compliance with policy, effective early action taken when concern is escalated, and a focus on outcomes for children in response to escalation being used.
Improvement Objective 5: CUMULATIVE IMPACT							
5.1	MULTI-AGENCY: Males identified as potential perpetrators of Domestic Abuse must be considered by front line practitioners as to what involvement and understanding they have regarding the impact of their behaviour	30.06.2025	TVP with support from BFfC CSPoA Service Manager	Blue	Red	Already in place as a process with TVP.	Audit and assurance of this action needs to be confirmed - will be a standalone multi-agency audit, probably led by Probation by TBC
5.2	MULTI-AGENCY: Patterns of risk or concern regarding domestic abuse are identified at the earliest opportunity; used to understand the cumulative impact for children, survivors and perpetrators; and develop plans for children and families	30.09.2025	BFfC CSPoA Service Manager	Green	Red	Practice expectations regarding recognising cumulative harm in place.	Included in September DA audit, evidence of impact expected by October 2025 and will be collected in further audits
Improvement Objective 6: USE OF DATA							
6.1	MULTI-AGENCY: Domestic Abuse needs assessment of the safeguarding partnership to be informed by relevant data from health, police and Local Authority in order to plan for the needs of the local population.	30.09.2025	BFfC CSPoA Service Manager	Amber	Red	BWSCP has been strengthening its governance arrangements, including developing a new Quality and Impact Partnership (QIP) to replace the current Independent Scrutiny and Impact Group (ISIG). BWSCP Reading QIP is focusing on agreeing the dataset for scrutiny by the group, drawing on all relevant data sources from partners in the local area. It is expected that this will be agreed late September, with a review meeting scheduled for 18 September. It will be further informed by the Reading strategic needs assessment that has been commissioned by Reading Domestic Abuse Strategic Group, due to be delivered early 2026.	Domestic abuse strategic needs analysis planned for Reading. Domestic abuse needs assessment has not yet been completed yet, so no impact measurement has happened, hence red RAG rating. Link to BWSCP DA Priority 3 actions regarding data and profile of children, victims, survivors and perpetrators. Further QIP meeting 18 Sept 2025 to degree impact measure with partners.
6.2	MULTI-AGENCY: Consolidation of performance information and data related to Domestic Abuse to fully understand the needs of the local population and impact upon safeguarding children.	30.09.2025	BWSCP DSP	Amber	Red	Range of data currently reported to different operational and strategic groups, BWSCP leading on developing a targeted information dataset. We expect the action to move to green after the meeting on the 18th September (see 6.1).	Domestic abuse strategic needs analysis planned for Reading. Link to BWSCP DA Priority 3 actions regarding data and profile of children, victims, survivors and perpetrators. Need to consider timescale for this action completion to align with DA Strategic Board Strategic Needs Assessment. Consolidation of performance information and data relating to domestic abuse has not yet been completed, so no impact measurement has taken place, hence red RAG rating.
6.3	MULTI-AGENCY: Review information sharing protocols and information sharing templates to ensure all agencies disclose relevant and appropriate information at the right time to enable effective safeguarding of children and young people whilst maintaining compliance with data protection requirements	31.10.2025	BWSCP DSP	Green	Amber	Strategy Discussion dip sample audit completed in June 2025 did not identify any concerns about information sharing practices.	Policy & Procedures BWSCP subgroup and Pan-Berks ISA protocol. Scheduled to be signed off by all local areas by Oct 2025. As sign off has not yet occurred, impact is amber.
Improvement Objective 7: COMMISSIONED SERVICES							
7.1	MULTI-AGENCY: The partnership to receive assurance that the criteria and barriers to accessing specialist services, such as Freedom programme and DA work with both parents, are well understood by professionals and the broader community, and mitigating actions have been taken to address any barriers to access.	30.09.2025	BWSCP DSP	Amber	Red	An independent review of the DA Strategic Partnership Board has concluded and will report back to the CSP in Sept 2025. This will include recommendations on the commissioning of specialist DA services. The DA Children's multi-agency task and finish group has been reconvened with a new ToR and is leading on a needs assessment, mapping and gap analysis of domestic abuse provision, as well as the delivery of BWSCP Priority actions on safeguarding children from DA.	Link to BWSCP DA Priority 3 actions regarding commissioned services and barriers to access. Joint commissioning arrangements are still being explored, and mapping of provision will then inform gap analysis and next steps, will be unable to measure impact until this has taken place, hence red RAG rating.
Improvement Objective 8: OVERSIGHT AND EFFECTIVENESS OF MARAC ARRANGEMENTS							

Ref	Objectives and actions	Complete by	Owners	Progress RAG	Impact RAG	Evidence	Comments
8.1	MULTI-AGENCY: The partnership seeks assurance that within MARAC meetings children's voices are clearly reflected in the actions set, so that children are seen, heard & safe, and that these actions are leading to better outcomes for the children.	30.09.2025	C Supt Felicity Parker	Green	Amber	There is a MARAC steering group for Berks West chaired by Karen Evans, Wokingham LA and been in place for 1 year. IT meets every quarter. The group has been asked for assurance of VofC is reflected in the actions and discussions. This should feed into this JTAI governance, the BWSCP and Reading CSP governance (the governance for DA is complex). The MARAC chair, DI Jackson is confident that actions are set in a through way in relation to VofC and they are chased and completed in a timely way. This needs assurance.	MARAC lead to review CSC attendance at MARAC Reading so that representatives consistently have the relevant information about named children and families to add value to the meeting
8.2	MULTI-AGENCY: The partnership seeks assurance that there is sufficient, effective, multi agency governance of the MARAC; driving performance and outcomes for children in Reading.	30.09.2026	C Supt Felicity Parker	Green	Amber	MARAC steering group provides scrutiny. Reporting of this steering group will be agreed in line with learning from the DA Strategic Partnership review.	Engagement with the findings of the Review of the DA Strategic Partnership Board will support the partnership to agree a governance structure for the MARAC
Improvement Objective 9: CHALLENGE AND ESCALATION							
9.1	MULTI-AGENCY: The partnership takes action to evidence how professionals effectively challenge and escalate concerns about children that are not receiving an adequate response, and how this impacts on the lives of children.	30.06.25	BWSCP DSP	Blue	Amber	The BWSCP Escalation Policy has been re-shared across all partners. A single escalation tracker is now in place in BFfC, with regular reporting to monitor progress and mitigate delays. A meeting was held by the JTAI Operational Group on 16/07/2025 to ensure and confirm that operational practice consistently supports strategic discussions within required timescales. U to further explore opportunities to enhance the escalation tracker as a collaborative partnership tool.	Mapping of escalation policies has been completed and confirms alignment of practice and expectations across the partnership. The RAG rating for progress was updated to blue on 16 July to reflect that actions have been taken to track, scrutinise, and report on escalations. This will remain an area of ongoing monitoring to assess impact. While formal impact measurement has not yet taken place—hence the amber RAG rating—early indicators show improvement. Escalations are occurring, leadership oversight has strengthened, and there is greater visibility and responsiveness. Case studies are emerging that demonstrate positive impact, including improved response times.
Improvement Objective 10: STRATEGIC GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS							
10.1	MULTI-AGENCY: Strengthen the role and oversight that the performance and Quality Improvement Sub Group and the Berkshire West Executive have to ensure both forums hold all partners to account and provide appropriate scrutiny and direction in order to secure the improvement required.	30.09.2025	BWSCP DSP	Green	Amber	Each local authority will have a Quality & Impact Partnerships (QIPs) and there will also be a chairs' meeting. Attendance at chairs' meeting (by LL or others depending on capacity) will help gather oversight and feedback into the work. The DA Children's multi-agency task and finish group will report into both the DA Partnership Board and the QIP.	Link to BWSCP DA Priority 3 actions regarding governance and Scrutiny. New BWSCP Quality Impact Partnerships being developed to replace BWSCP Independent Scrutiny and Impact groups. First QIP took place in Sept, so impact is amber.
10.2	MULTI-AGENCY: Strengthen formal communication and reporting arrangement across the strategic partnership - Domestic Abuse Board, Safeguarding Children Partnership, Community Safety Partnership etc	30.09.2025	BWSCP DSP	Green	Amber	The DA Children's multi-agency task and finish group will report into both the DA Partnership Board (which reports into the CSP) and the QIP (which reports into the BWSCP DSP's), strengthening and aligning reporting arrangements.	This is a new arrangement and unable to measure impact until meeting and reporting cycles are embedded.

NHS Dental services in Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West

Report to:

The Reading Adult Social Care, Children's and Education
(ACE) Committee

**Hugh O'Keeffe, Head of Pharmacy, Optometry and Dental Services
Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (BOB)
Integrated Care Board (ICB)**

October 2025

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1. Introduction

1.1 Commissioning arrangements

On 1st July 2022 the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (BOB) Integrated Care Board took on delegated responsibility for Dentistry, alongside Pharmacy and Optometry. Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) have an explicit purpose to improve health outcomes for their whole population and the delegation will allow the ICB to integrate services to enable decisions to be taken as close as possible to their residents. The ICB is working to ensure their residents can experience joined up care, with an increased focus on prevention, addressing inequalities and achieve better access to dental care and advice.

The ICB discharges its responsibility for dental commissioning in partnership with NHS Frimley who host a Commissioning hub for Pharmacy, Optometry and Dental Services, providing operational leadership within ICB governance structures.

Clinical engagement is currently achieved via a Local Dental Network (LDN) covering the Thames Valley area (Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire West and Berkshire East). This is a clinically led group involving Dentists, Dental Public Consultants, representatives from Health Education England and the Local Dental Committees and service commissioners. Reporting to the LDN are specialist led Managed Clinical Networks for Oral Surgery, Orthodontics, Restorative Dentistry and Special Care and Paediatrics.

As part of its 10-year plan for the NHS ('Fit for the Future'), published in July 2025 the government advised of a new operating model for the NHS. This includes making the ICBs strategic commissioners of local healthcare services. Plans have since been announced about the ICB configuration from 1st April 2026. BOB will join with Berkshire East (Frimley ICB) to become the Thames Valley ICB from April 2026. Arrangements are currently being made to establish this new ICB. As part of the preparation, BOB and Berkshire East started to work on a cluster basis from 1st October.

1.2 NHS Dental services

Patients are not registered with a dentist in the same way as they are with a GP. A dental practice is only responsible for a patient's care while in treatment, although many will maintain a list of regular patients so may only have the capacity to take on new patients when patients do not return for scheduled check-ups or advise they are moving away from the area.

Dental practices deliver services via cash limited contracts with the NHS through which they are required to deliver agreed levels of activity each year ('Units of Dental Activity' – UDAs).

Since the onset of the pandemic dental services have faced major challenges. Enhanced infection control procedures, necessitated by the types of procedures carried out in dental surgeries, led to reduced dental capacity in the period March 2020 to July 2022. Their capacity was gradually increased as infection rates have dropped, under strict guidance aimed at keeping patients and staff safe. In July 2022 practices returned to full capacity.

Although the gradual increase improved access to dental care there remained backlog of care from earlier in the pandemic. The rate of recovery was impacted by the greater oral health needs of patients due to gaps in their attendance with treatment plans taking longer to complete and some practices have decided to cease NHS provision. This has impacted primary care dental services and referral services including hospital and a range of community-based services.

One of the most significant impacts was on whether dental practices continued to provide services under the NHS. Between 2021-24, 6% of NHS capacity was lost due to contract handbacks and reductions.

The challenges facing NHS Dental services have been similar across the country with changes made to the national contract in 2022 and 2024 to try to address these challenges. This has included actions, such as:

- Incentivising practices to take on new patients through the new patient premium (2024-25).
- Increasing the amount the NHS could pay practices for contract delivery, allowing for payment for up 110% performance rather than 102%.
- Improving information for patients.
- Increasing the minimum Unit of Dental Activity (UDA) price from £23 (in 2022) and then £28 (2024).
- Increased payments for more complex Band 2 treatments.
- Personalised patient recall intervals.
- 'Golden Hellos' to support recruitment in areas facing greater challenges.
- A 'Smile for Life' programme to promote oral health.

- Deployment of mobile vans in identified underserved areas to support access.
- Consultation on expanding water fluoridation, initially in the north-east.
- Workforce changes, such as Dental Care Professionals to work to their full scope of practice.
- Increase training places for new Dentists and Dental Care Professionals.
- Making it easier for practices to recruit overseas Dentists who meet the UK's regularity standards.
- ICBs were given powers to recurrently rebase financial allocations to practices if they persistently underperformed in delivering their contracted levels of activity. Previously, monies could only be recovered on a non-recurrent basis. This is due to take effect from 20226-27

In 2025-26, ICBs were asked by the new government to increase the number of urgent appointments they commissioned in line with the manifesto commitment to commission 700,000 additional appointments.

The ICB has also carried out local actions to address some of these challenges, including:

- Re-commissioning activity that had been lost due to contract handbacks, with about half of the activity (67,000 UDAs) was recommissioned from local practices from April 2024. The balance is being commissioned via procurement of new practices, with the main focus on Oxfordshire which has lost 75% of the total activity lost in BOB due to contract handbacks and reductions.
- Flexible Commissioning where practices can convert a proportion of their activity from delivering UDA targets to providing access to more vulnerable patient groups. This scheme started in June 2023.
- Children's Oral Health Improvement services via the new practices in Oxfordshire with other practices being invited to take part in a pilot due to commence later in 2025-26.

There are further changes proposed to the national contract from April 2026. These are more substantial in that they propose to strengthen incentives for practices to provide on-going management of patients' oral health rather than just pay for episodes of care and to require all practices to provide urgent care. The aim of these incentives is to increase the extent to which dental

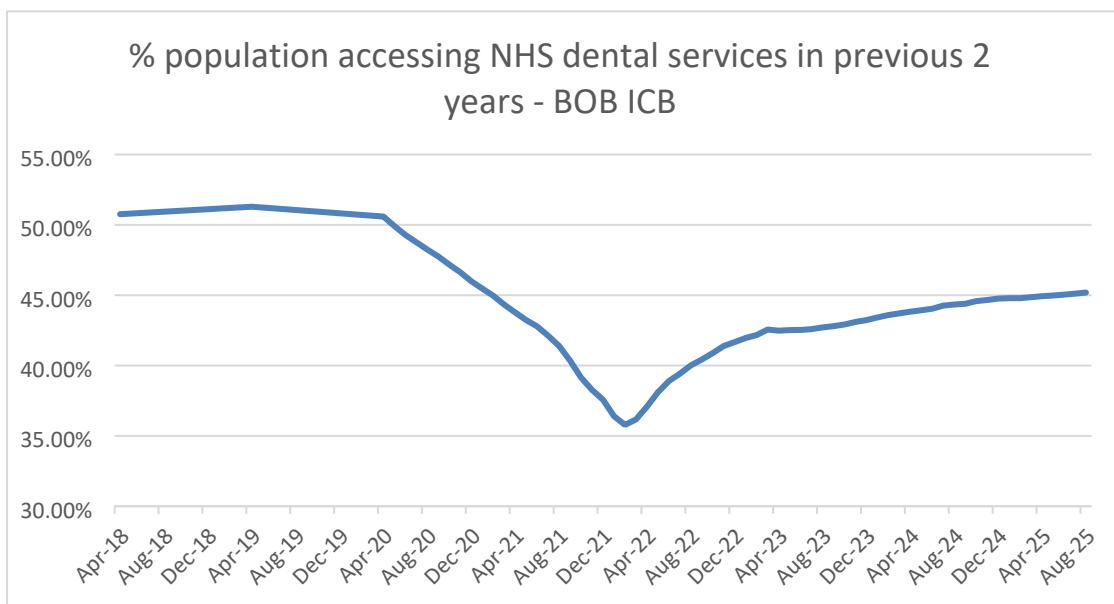
practices take on new patients and reduce recalls for patients who are by and large dentally fit. A consultation on the proposed changes was carried out with the profession and other stakeholders in July and August with a response due in October.

2. Access to services

Access to primary care dental services is measured based on the number of unique patients attending over a 2 year period. The introduction of the current dental contract in 2006 was accompanied by a programme of ringfenced financial investment under the Dental Access Programme designed to recover NHS dental access which had fallen significantly following the introduction of the 1992 contract. Access to NHS Dentistry in the Thames Valley (BOB plus Berkshire East) increased from about 43% of the population in 2008 to just over 51% in 2019 (an increase of about 250,000 people; 25%).

The impact of the pandemic was such that by early 2022, the number of patients attending BOB ICB dental practices in the previous 2 years fell to below 36%. Since then, there has been a recovery in access. In August 2025, 45.19% of the BOB ICB population had attended an NHS dental practice in the previous 2 years (778,903 people, an increase of 162,295 compared to February 2022). This is the second highest percentage in the South-East Region. NHS Frimley has the highest rate at 47.51%

Chart 1 Access to NHS Dental services in BOB 2018 – 2025

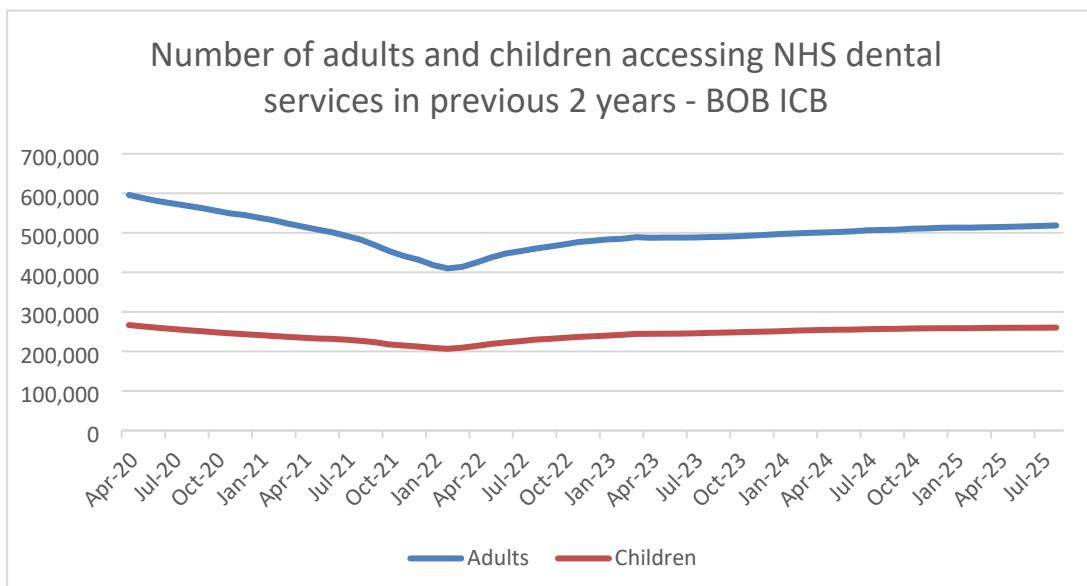


The rate of increased access has been similar for adults and children. The table and chart below detail the numbers of adults and children in BOB accessing NHS dental services in this period:

Table 1 Number of people accessing NHS Dental services in BOB February 2022 and August 2025

Patient group	Number attending Feb '22	Number attending Aug '25	Increase	% increase
Adults	409,943	518,657	108,714	26.52%
Children	206,665	260,246	53,581	25.93%
Total	616,608	778,903	162,295	26.32%

Chart 2 Number of adults and children accessing NHS Dental services 2020 - 2025



However, the number of unique patients attending is still some way below the pre-pandemic figure of 51.29%.

As capacity has been increased practices have been able to deliver more of their contracted activity. Practices are required to deliver an agreed number of Units of Dental Activity (UDAs) each year. The UDA payment bands relate to the patient treatment bands under the NHS Patient Charges Regulations 2005.

<https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/dentists/dental-costs/how-much-will-i-pay-for-nhs-dental-treatment/>

3. Contract Delivery

NHS Dental practices are independent contractors and are paid to deliver an agreed level of activity each year. These levels are based on levels of activity commissioned at the point the current dental contract took effect in 2006 and any additional activity commissioned since then.

Practices are contractually required to deliver a minimum of 96% of contracted activity each year to avoid financial recoveries. If they fall below this threshold financial recoveries will be made. Prior to the pandemic the average annual delivery in the BOB area was about 95%. This fell to 28% in 2020-21 and has been increasing since then, recovering to 85.8% in 2023-24. The table below details contract delivery in 2024-25.

Table 2 BOB ICB contract delivery 2024-25

Area	Number of practices	UDAs commissioned	UDAs delivered	% delivery	UDAs delivered with NPP	% delivery
Bucks Central	10	144,154	129,974.60	90.16%	134,467.10	94.67%
Bucks East	14	80,810	77,233	95.57%	82,415.39	101.99%
Bucks North	4	48,246	36,753.8	76.18%	38,668.53	80.15%
Bucks South	16	119,172	110,237	92.50%	116,802.84	98.01%
Bucks West	22	199,295	189,664.60	95.17%	199,970.70	100.34%
Buckinghamshire	66	591,677	543,863	91.92%	574,324.56	97.07%
Cherwell	14	215,668	155,943.60	72.31%	161,538.94	74.90%
Oxford	19	256,790	246,608.20	96.03%	263,207.57	102.50%
South Oxon	19	149,380	141,853.20	94.96%	150,202.56	100.55%
Vale of the White Horse	11	95,930	80,026.80	83.42%	85,870.46	89.51%
West Oxon	15	114,285	100,588.20	88.02%	106,224.28	92.95%
Oxfordshire	78	832,053	725,020	87.14%	767,043.81	92.19%
Reading	16	202,846	200,366.80	98.78%	212,099.19	104.56%
West Berkshire	19	199,519	169,928.20	85.17%	179,978.53	90.21%
Wokingham	12	163,272	159,940.20	97.96%	170,679.59	104.54%
Berkshire West	47	565,637	530,235.20	93.74%	562,757.31	99.49%
Total	191	1,989,367	1,799,118.20	90.44%	1,904,125.68	95.72%

The number of UDAs delivered increased from 1,724,811 in 2023-24 to 1,799,118 in 2024-25 with % delivery increasing from 85.8% to 90.4%.

Delivery was boosted by the New Patient Premium (NPP) paid as activity credits to practices with an overall delivery of just 1.9m UDAs; 95.7% of the UDAs commissioned. The NPP scheme ended on 31st March 2025.

4. Actions to address the access challenges

4.1 Replacing the lost activity

To address the impact of contract handbacks and reductions, the ICB commissioned temporary UDAs for the period to 31st March 2024. The ICB has also been working as part of an NHS South-East programme to replace UDAs that have been lost due to contract handbacks and reductions. This is being pursued as a two-stage process. The first has been to approach local practices to apply to provide additional activity to replace what has been lost in their area. If this falls short of the activity sought, the ICB will go out to procurement to seek new provision into the area.

The first stage of the process has been completed, and additional activity has been commissioned from 1st April 2024 on the following basis:

Table 3 Number and locations of approved applications for additional activity

Local Authority	Number of contract handbacks and reductions	Number UDAs handed back since 2021	Additional UDAs commissioned from April 2024 – phase 1	Location(s)
Bucks Central	2	5,527	7,356	Haddenham and Aylesbury
Bucks East	2	3,606	0	
Bucks North	2	611	0	
Bucks South	1	760	117	Chalfont St Peter
Bucks West	1	446	12,082	High Wycombe, Wooburn Green and Loudwater
Buckinghamshire total	8	10,930	19,555	
Cherwell	3	22,764	3,995	Bloxham and Banbury

Oxford	3	3,962	7,800	Cowley and Headington
South Oxfordshire	3	1,719	4,500	Thame and Henley
Vale of the White Horse	3	31,310	0	
West Oxfordshire	6	43,494	789	Witney
Oxfordshire	18	103,249	17,084	
Reading	3	9,888	11,500	Reading
West Berkshire	0	0	4,800	Newbury and Thatcham
Wokingham	2	13,690	14,047	Woodley, Wokingham and Twyford
Berkshire West	5	23,578	30,347	
BOB	31	137,757	66,986	

No applications were received for Bucks East, Bucks North or Vale of the White Horse.

The impact of this phase has been to increase the levels of provision to above pre-pandemic levels in Buckinghamshire and Berkshire West (prior to adjustments due to Flexible Commissioning), but gaps in provision have remained in Oxfordshire where there has been a more significant loss of capacity.

The next phase of the programme is focussing on Oxfordshire with a procurement programme which commenced in October 2024. There are plans for new provision in Cherwell, the Vale of the White Horse and West Oxfordshire with 5 new practices planned: total of 88,000 UDAs. One of the new practices opened in September 2025 with plans for the others to open later in the year.

4.2 Support for patients who have faced challenges accessing services

The ICB has also commissioned a Flexible Commissioning service for patients who have faced challenges access dental care. If practices wish to take part, they can convert up a % of their contract value from delivering activity targets to providing access sessions for patients who have struggled to access dental care. The scheme reduces overall capacity, but it allows more time for practices to treat patients with more complex needs.

The following patient groups have been identified in priority groups for the scheme:

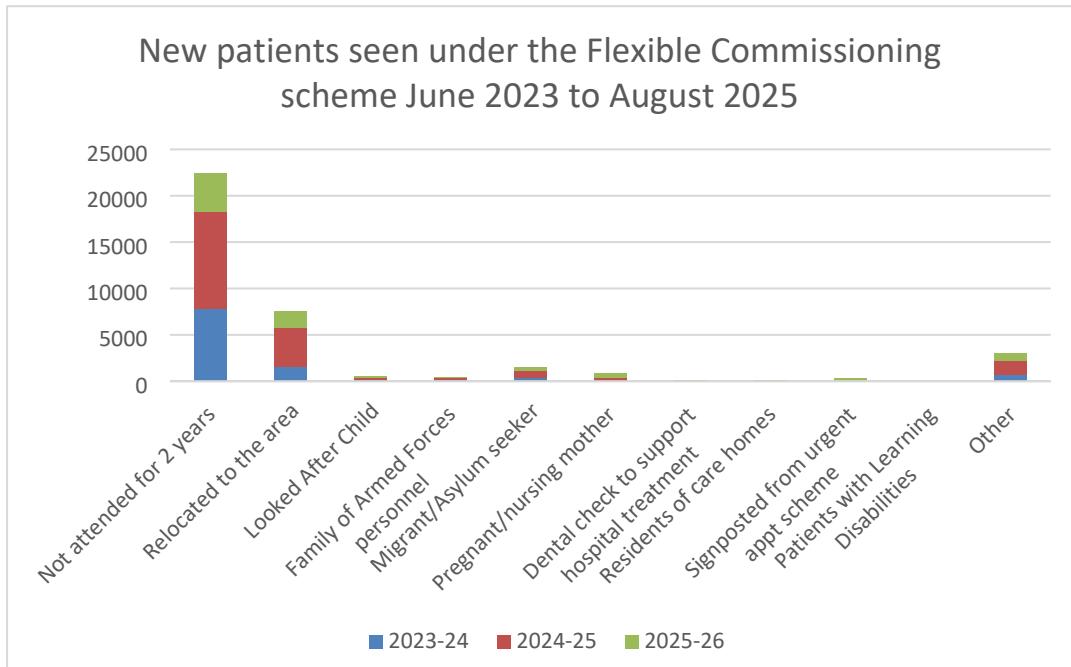
- Patients who have not attended a local dental practice for more than 2 years
- Patients relocating to the area
- Looked After Children
- Asylum seekers and refugees
- Families of Armed Forces personnel
- Pregnant and nursing mothers (introduced July 2024)
- Patients who need dental reviews as part of hospital treatment (introduced July 2024)
- Other groups as identified by the practice

In April 2025 residents of care homes and patients seen under the Urgent Dental Appointment scheme and requiring on-going treatment were added as patient cohorts. In July 2025, patients with learning disability were also added to the list of patients to be seen under the scheme.

There are now 40 practices who have opted to take part with 25 from Oxfordshire, 9 from Buckinghamshire and 6 from Berkshire West.

Since the scheme started, more than 37,000 new patients have attended with over 52,000 total attendances.

Chart 3 Patients seen under the Flexible Commissioning scheme 2023 – 25



4.3 Urgent Access

In 2024-25 there were 1.034m patient attendances in the BOB area, of which about 95,000 (9.1%) related to urgent treatment.

There are services provided on evenings, weekends and bank holidays to treat patients who have an urgent treatment need (usually defined as pain, swelling or bleeding), but this only accounts for about 6% of urgent activity.

The vast majority is provided in dental practices. In its election manifesto in 2024 the government made a commitment to commission an additional 700,000 urgent appointments across the country. This equates to a target of just over 15,000 additional appointments in BOB, increasing the total number of urgent attendances to about 110,000 per annum.

The ICB piloted a scheme for practices to deliver additional urgent appointments, which went live in the BOB in January 2025 with 34 practices taking part. The practices involved have submitted details of the days on which they provide the sessions which has been forwarded to NHS 111 who can direct patients as appropriate.

This has been continued into 2025-26 with 36 practices providing an additional 2,576 sessions. The table below details where the additional sessions are being provided:

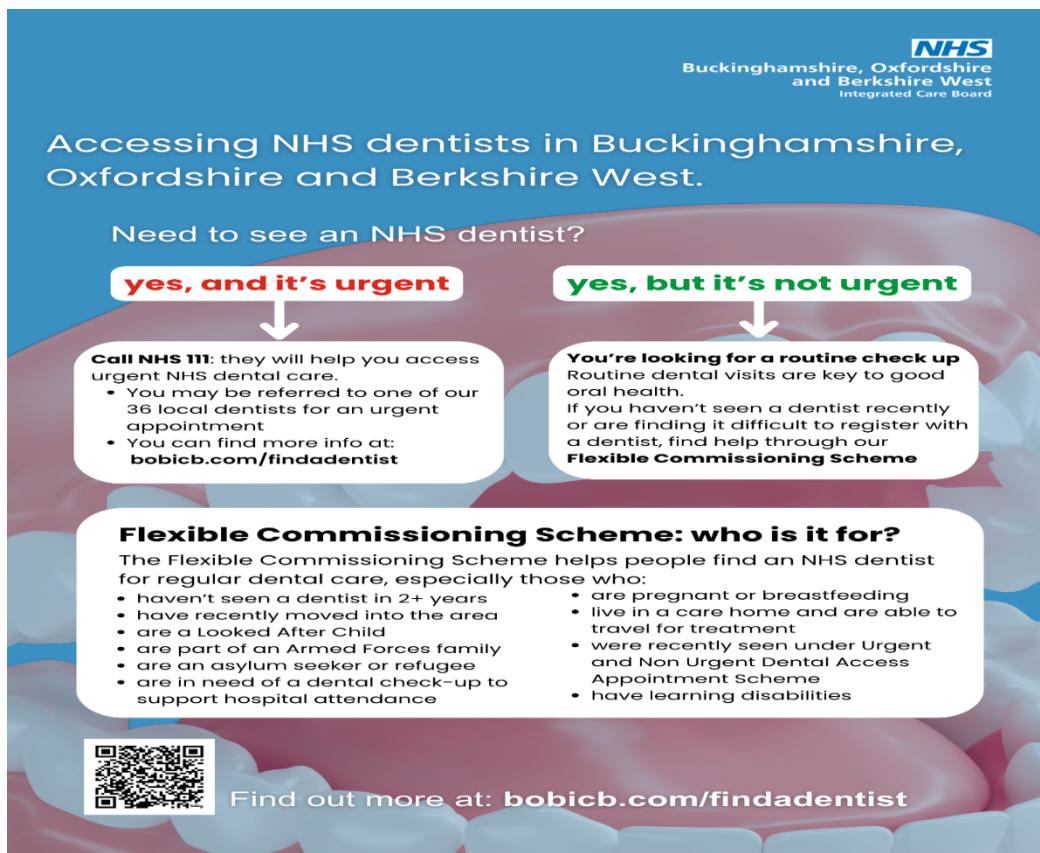
Table 4 Number and locations of Additional Urgent Appointment sessions

Health system	Number of practices	Number of sessions	Planned number of attendances
Buckinghamshire			
Bucks East	1	10	60
Bucks Central/North	2	321	1,926
Bucks West	5	515	3,090
Total	8	846	5,076
Oxfordshire			
Cherwell	5	239	1,434
Oxford	6	412	2,472
South Oxfordshire	6	221	1,326
Vale of the White Horse/ West	2	164	984

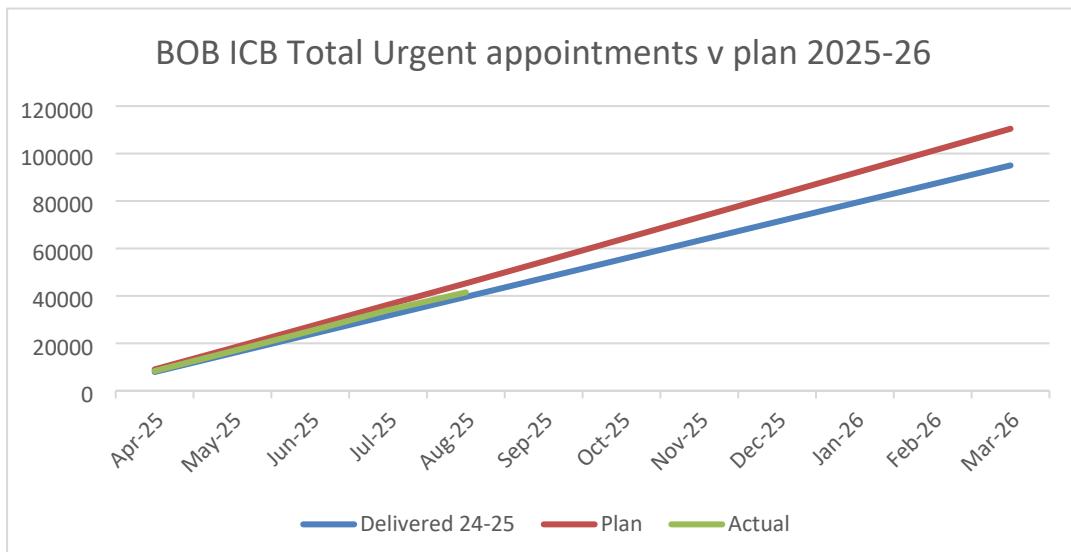
Oxfordshire			
Total	19	1,036	6,216
Berkshire West			
Reading	4	310	1,860
West Berkshire	3	229	1,374
Wokingham	2	156	936
Total	9	695	4,170
BOB	36	2,576	15,462

Patients can access these sessions via NHS 111 or by contacting the practices directly. More information about this service and the Flexible Commissioning scheme can be found on the ICB website at <https://www.bucksoxonberksw.icb.nhs.uk/your-health/dentists/>

The ICB has also developed a poster which has been shared with a range of stakeholders to provide 'at a glance' information about these services:



There has been an increase in the number of urgent appointments attended by BOB patients in 2025-26 (up by 4.75% compared to August 2024), but this is below the target that has been set for the ICB.



All ICBs nationally are below target in respect of their plans. In September 2025, the government introduced the Urgent Dental Care incentive scheme where individual practices will be incentivised to deliver more urgent appointments than they did in 2024-25. Arrangements are being made to introduce the scheme from October 2025.

The consultation in respect of the dental contract changes from April 2026 proposes that these urgent appointments are built into core contracts with a requirement that all practices are available to see urgent patients. Presently, practices are only required to see patients in a current course of treatment. The proposal is to increase the payment made to the practices to see patients with an urgent treatment need.

4.4 Children's Oral Health Improvement

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, the ICB was part of the national 'Starting Well' programme designed to encourage children to attend the Dentist at an early age as possible (as part of the national 'Dental Check By One' campaign). The scheme involved practice engagement with a range of stakeholders to encourage attendance. The scheme was put on hold due to the pandemic. The ICB is now seeking to test the provision of a Children's Oral Health Improvement service along the lines of Starting Well. The service will be tested with the 5 new practices opening in Oxfordshire in the period up to 31st March 2027. Their contracts will be flexed to enable this.

Earlier in the year, the government announced the launch of the local authority Supervised Toothbrushing with resources allocated to the following localities in BOB:

Local Authority	Popn 3-5 year olds in most deprived 20% LSOA	In setting toothbrush	In setting toothpaste	Take home toothbrush and toothpaste	Pallets
Oxfordshire	1,178	3,534	746	2,356	4
Reading	692	2,076	438	1,384	3
West Berks	88	264	56	176	2
Buckinghamshire	65	195	41	130	2

Further to the launch of this initiative the ICB has identified additional funding and approached all practices in the ICB to seek Expressions of Interest to take part in the Children's Oral Health Improvement scheme, with the aim of working alongside the Supervised Toothbrushing settings. The ICB is currently reviewing applications with training for those signing up to the scheme planned for November. The ICB will share details of the practices taking part in the scheme with the local authorities.

4.5 Blood Pressure Monitoring

As part of the drive to increase the number of patients with recorded blood pressures, NHS England has established a number of pilot sites across the country to test the delivery of a Blood Pressure monitoring services in Dental and Optometry practices. BOB is one of 11 dental pilot sites. There are referral pathways to Pharmacy and GPs if patients have a high reading in a dental practice. Just over 1,000 patients have had checks in dental practices in BOB since the scheme began. Results from the BOB area have been fed back nationally where an evaluation of the scheme will be carried with a report produced by the end of the year. This links closely to the ICB's intention to ensure residents can experience joined up care, with an increased focus on prevention, addressing inequalities

5. Other Dental Services

In addition to primary care dental services, the ICB commissions specialist services in community and hospital services. The services commissioned for Buckinghamshire are detailed below:

Table 5 Other Dental services commissioned in BOB ICB

Service	Name of provider	Contractual status	Key challenges
Orthodontics	16 practices	Time limited PDS contracts. ICB has agreed to extend to 31 st March 2029	Waiting times for treatment. Working with MCN to review.
Community Dental Service (for adults with additional needs and children)	Central and North-West London NHS Foundation Trust (Bucks) Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	Time limited PDS contracts. NHS standard contracts for treatments provided in hospital setting. ICB has agreed to directly award under Provider Selection Regime regulations (2023) to 31 st March 2028.	Waiting times for treatment, particularly treatment under General Anaesthetic to review. Working with MCN to review
Unscheduled Dental Care (evenings, weekends and bank holidays)	Central and North-West London NHS Foundation Trust Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust Drs Tariq and Kaur (Reading) DA Clinics (Thatcham)	Time limited PDS contracts. ICB has agreed to directly award under Provider Selection Regime regulations (2023) to 31 st March 2028.	Impact of proposed of changes to dental contract from April 2026.
Oral and Maxillofacial, Restorative and Orthodontic Services	Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (spoke) Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (hub) Royal Berkshire Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (spoke)	Annually renewable NHS standard contracts.	Waiting times for treatment. Commissioning of community-based tier 2 services with required capacity to reduce pressure on hospital services.
Tier 2 Oral Surgery	Rodericks Dental Ltd (Locations in Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West)	Time limited PDS contracts. ICB re-commissioning services with new contracts to take effect from 1 st April 2026.	Waiting times for treatment. Plans to increase in tier 2 capacity from April 2026.

Tier 2 Restorative	Mr A Rai (Locations in Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West)	Time limited PDS contracts. ICB re-commissioning services (Endodontic and Prosthodontic) with new contracts to take effect from 1 st April 2026.	Impact of proposed changes to dental contract on periodontal pathway. New contract proposing significant increase in periodontal provision in primary care.
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Apart from the Unscheduled Dental Care service, these services are all accessed on referral. There have been challenges in terms of waiting times and the ICB has been working with the providers to seek to reduce the numbers waiting, investing additional resource where needed.

The ICB is working in partnership with other ICBs across the South-East Region to re-commission several of these referral services from 2026 onwards.

6. Summary

There have been significant improvements in access to and delivery of dental services since the peak of the coronavirus pandemic. Contract delivery and access to services has been increasing over the last few years.

Local actions such as allowing practices to deliver more activity; additional urgent capacity; the Flexible Commissioning scheme and replacing activity lost due to contract handbacks/reductions has helped to ease the pressures.

Significant challenges remain. The proposed changes to the national contract from April 2026 are the most significant since the 2006 contract was introduced. They are designed to provide more support to practices to take on new patients and provide on-going care achieving improved oral health for those with greater oral health needs. There has been recognition at national level that many of the schemes developed locally by the ICBs have been established to address gaps in the national contract. There should be more information about plans for implementation in the period after October 2025.

There are on-going challenges with access to specialist referral services. The ICB is carrying out programmes of review and re-commissioning to meet those challenges, particularly around waiting times for treatment.

The ICB has developed a primary care strategy, which includes dental services, with the aim of commissioning services to meet local needs in ways that are sustainable. A key focus of the ICB's primary care strategy is prevention. The recent investment in Supervised Toothbrushing and the ICB's

plans to pilot children's oral health improvement services should help closer working between the local authorities and ICB to strengthen oral health prevention services in the area. It will be important to continue work collaboratively and innovatively to maintain progress

Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee



Reading
Borough Council

Working better with you

15 October 2025

Title	SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS CONSULTATION 2027/28
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Lara Patel, Executive Director Children's Services
Report author	Brian Grady, Director of Education
Lead Councillor	Rachel Eden, Lead Councillor for Public Health and Education
Council priority	Promote more equal communities in Reading
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) That the Committee approve the proposed consultation on the relevant admission arrangements for 2027-28, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) The proposed reduction of Published Admission Number at Micklands Primary School. b) The proposed reduction of Published Admission Number at Moorlands Primary School. c) The proposed reduction of Published Admission Number at Whitley Park Primary School.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report invites the Committee to approve the proposed consultation on the relevant admission arrangements for 2027-28. Specifically the consultation will consider the following elements for the academic year 2027/28 (September 2027 to July 2028):
 - 1.1.1. The admission arrangements for Community Primary Schools in Reading.
 - 1.1.2. The coordinated scheme for primary and junior schools.
 - 1.1.3. The coordinated scheme for secondary schools.
 - 1.1.4. The Relevant Area.
 - 1.1.5. The primary phase catchment areas.
- 1.2. The consultation will include proposed Published Admission Number reductions for three schools and other administrative proposed amendments for 2027/28 to comply with the School Admissions Code 2021.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. School admissions are subject to statutory requirements, set out in law and particularly the School Admissions Code 2021, published by the Government and approved by Parliament. As part of those requirements, local authorities must draw up schemes for coordinating admissions to all maintained schools in their area. The purpose of coordinated schemes is to ensure that every parent/carer of a child living in Reading who has completed and submitted an on-time application receives one offer of a school place at the conclusion of the normal admissions round. The schemes set out a process and timescale to enable the offer of a single school place. They do not affect the right of individual admission authorities to set and operate their own admission arrangements, but they do include arrangements for resolving multiple offers, where a place can be offered at more than one school. Reading Borough Council is the admitting authority for community and voluntary controlled schools within the borough.
- 2.2. In addition, the Council is also required to determine the admission policy for community schools which includes the number of places to be made available at each school and the oversubscription criteria to be applied where there are more applicants than places available. Where the over-subscription criteria include catchment areas these must also be approved. The governing bodies of academies, free schools, voluntary aided and foundation schools are required to determine their own admission number and oversubscription criteria. Those schools also operate their own arrangements as part of the coordinated scheme – and where they are oversubscribed, continue to decide which applicants best meet their oversubscription criteria.
- 2.3. The School Admissions code of 2021 section 1.45 says all admission authorities must consult on their admission arrangements at least every 7 years. Reading Borough Council last consulted on the policy in 2018 and therefore we must consult this year.
- 2.4. At the time of writing Reading Borough Council deliver its School Admissions Service through Brighter Futures for Children Ltd (BFfC). BFfC is an independent, not-for-profit company, wholly owned by Reading Borough Council, set up in December 2018 to deliver children's services, early help, education and SEND services in Reading. From the 1 October Children's Service's will move back to the council.
- 2.5. The Consultation must last for a minimum of 6 weeks and must take place between 1 October and 31 January in the determination year.

3. The Proposal

- 3.1. That the consultation takes place between 17 October and 28 November 2025 (a total of 6 weeks) and consults on the following proposals:

3.2. Primary Co-ordinated schemes 2027-28 – Annexe A

- 3.2.1. Proposed change 1 on page 5 – Clarify that any change of preference submitted by via online application must after the 15 January be done by emailing the Reading School Admissions Team
- 3.2.2. Proposed change 2 on page 7 – Parents/carers who submitted a paper application and provided an email address will also receive an email with a formal offer. Any paper applications without an email address will receive details of their offer by letter (posted 2nd Class)

3.3. Secondary School Co-ordinated schemes 2027-28 Annexe D

- 3.3.1. Proposed change 1 on page 5 – Clarify that any change of preference submitted via online application must after the 15 January be done by emailing the Reading School Admissions Team
- 3.3.2. Proposed change 2 on page 7 – Parents/carers who submitted a paper application and provided an email address will also receive an email with a formal offer. Any paper applications without an email address will receive details of their offer by letter (posted 2nd Class)

3.4. Admissions Policy for Infant, Junior and Primary Schools 2027/28 - Annexe B

- 3.4.1. Proposed change 1 page 14 – to clarify for in-year admissions Category 6 of the Oversubscription Criteria for Community Primary and Infant Schools does not apply
- 3.4.2. Proposed change 2 page 15 – It is proposed that there will be a reduction to the Published Admission Numbers (PAN) for the following community and voluntary controlled schools

School	Current PAN	Proposed PAN
Micklands Primary School	30 (amended by the Office of the Schools Adjudicator for 2025 & 2026)	30
Moorlands Primary	60	30
Whitley Park Primary School	90	60

- 3.4.3. By reducing Published Admission Numbers, these proposals will allow the schools identified to organise in the most structurally viable way and enable them to achieve financial viability, which will in turn, directly support the quality of education at these schools.
- 3.4.4. Proposed reductions in Published Admission Numbers are not expected to impact on the availability of local school places for parents. Reading as a Local Authority with duties to ensure sufficiency of school places plan on an overall minimum 5% surplus of school places in order to accommodate in year admissions. We are reviewing planning for in-year admissions and consequently will be considering revising overall minimum planning surplus in future years, including benchmarking with other neighbour and statistical neighbour LAs.
- 3.4.5. School census and demography data evidence that Reading Borough Council has sufficient school places to meet the needs of children over the next five years, with a current projected 12.9% surplus of school places in the primary phase.

3.5. The Relevant Area - Annexe E

- 3.5.1. The School Standards & Framework Act 1998 requires Local Authorities to establish Relevant Area(s) for admission policy consultations. The Relevant Area is the area in which admission authorities must consult with schools regarding their proposed admission arrangements before finalising them.
- 3.5.2. Once the relevant area has been determined, any school or academy proposing to change arrangements will need to consult with all other interested parties within this area in line with the Schools Admission Code.
- 3.5.3. Reading's last consultation ran from 17 October until 9 December 2018 and was determined on the 14 February 2019 to ensure that schools and academies use

the defined relevant area to inform their statutory consultation process on admission arrangements.

3.5.4. Reading has reviewed the current Relevant Area and no change is proposed for school year 2027/28.

3.6. Primary designated catchment areas - Annex C

3.6.1. The proposal to consult with no changes to the designated catchment area.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

4.1. The admission schemes contribute to the aims of ensuring that there are good education, leisure and cultural opportunities for people in Reading.

4.2. The Council Plan has established five priorities for the years 2025/28. These priorities are:

- Promote more equal communities in Reading
- Secure Reading's economic and cultural success
- Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce our carbon footprint
- Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children
- Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future

4.3. In delivering these priorities, we will be guided by the following set of principles:

- Putting residents first
- Building on strong foundations
- Recognising, respecting, and nurturing all our diverse communities
- Involving, collaborating, and empowering residents
- Being proudly ambitious for Reading

4.4. Full details of the Council Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the Council's website - [Council plan - Reading Borough Council](#). These priorities and the Council Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.

4.5. Providing sufficient school places and ensuring fair and equitable access to a good quality local school place helps the Council achieve its objectives to promote more equal communities in Reading and secure Reading's economic and cultural success

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

5.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).

5.2. Effective school admission arrangements combined with sufficient school places ensure that where possible, children are placed as near as possible to their local school. This minimises transport related to school attendance and is a positive contributor to addressing environmental and climate implications of school travel.

6. Community Engagement

6.1. We have a statutory duty to consult every 7 years on the coordinated scheme for school admissions. We last consulted between 17 October 2018 and 10 December 2018 as per the School Admission Code. Therefore we are required to consult this year. Consultation arrangements are set out in the documents appended to this report.

7. Equality Implications

7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been undertaken. The EqIA is included in Annex G. The results of the screening assessment evidence no negative impacts have been identified for persons with a protected characteristic. Compliance with the School Admissions Code (2021) will ensure that as a public authority Reading Borough Council will have determined school admission arrangements which work to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

8.1. None

9. Legal Implications

9.1. The admissions arrangements (Annexe A & C) and Primary Admissions Policy for Community Schools 2027 (Annexe B) attached to this report ensure that Reading Borough Council demonstrates compliance with the School Admissions Code (2021).

10. Financial Implications

10.1. None arising directly from this report. Reductions in Published Admission Numbers at identified schools are expected to help schools set balanced budgets.

11. Timetable for Implementation

11.1. The School Admissions Code (2021) sets out the timeframes for consultations. In line with the requirements of the School Admissions Code timetable requirements it is proposed to consult between 17 October and 28 November 2025.

11.2. The outcome of the consultation and final documents will then be presented at the January 2026 ACE committee for final decision.

11.3. To ensure compliance with the requirements of the School Admissions Code 2021, admission arrangements and accompanying documentation must be determined by Reading Borough Council as the Admissions Authority by the 28 February and published on the relevant RBC website by 15 March 2026.

12. Background Papers

12.1. There are none

Appendices – delete if there are none

1. Annexe A - Primary 2027 Coordinated Scheme

2. **Annexe B - Primary Admissions Policy for Community Schools 2027**
3. **Annexe C - Primary_Designations_2027**
4. **Annexe D -Secondary 2027 Coordinated Scheme**
5. **Annexe E -Relevant Area 2027**
6. **Annexe F -Consultation School Admissions 2026**
7. **Annexe G - Annexe G - Equality Impact Assessment**



Coordinated Admissions scheme for Reading Borough Council Primary, Infant and Junior Schools for the 2027/2028 academic year.

For September 2027 entry

Determined on

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Introduction

~~Reading Borough Council delivers its school admissions service through Brighter Futures for Children (BFFC). BFFC is an independent, not for profit company, wholly owned by Reading Borough Council, set up in December 2018 to deliver children's services, early help, education and SEND services in Reading.~~

The Reading coordinated scheme was ~~last~~ consulted between **17 October and the 28 November 2025**. ~~There have been no significant changes since that consultation took place, therefore no requirement for a public consultation.~~

This Scheme is made under section 84 of the Standards and Framework Act 1998 and in accordance with the school Admissions (Admissions Arrangements and Coordination of admissions arrangements (England) Regulations 2014.

The purpose of this coordinated scheme for primary/infant/junior school admissions is to ensure that every parent/carer of a child **resident in Reading Borough**, who has applied, receives **one offer** of a school place at the conclusion of the normal admissions round. At its heart is clear communication between Reading school admissions, other Local Authorities, community, and all state schools in Reading.

Parents/carers who live in the Borough of Reading **must** apply to Reading school admissions if they require a place for their child in any state school as part of a routine admissions round, including schools in other local authorities, academies and free schools. Applications cannot be submitted to a school or to the local authority in which the school is situated. Parents/carers living within any other local authority areas must apply through their own local authority admissions service.

Coordination with Reading school admissions does not affect the right of individual admission authorities to set and operate their own admission arrangements. Admission authorities for Reading schools will need to comply with the timetable set out below.

These arrangements deal mainly with a child's first admission to school during the school year from **September 2027 to August 2028**. The children concerned are those born between **1 September 2022 and 31 August 2023**. The place offered is a full-time place from **September 2027**.

Admission to Junior School in September is for children born between **1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020**.

National Offer Day for Primary and Junior Admissions is **16 April 2027**

Coordinated Admissions scheme for Reading Borough Council Primary, Infant and Junior Schools for the **2027/2028** academic year.

Applications

Reading Borough Council will put in place procedures that, where possible, ensure all parents/carers living in the Borough of Reading (with a child eligible to start school in September 2027) will be aware of the application process. Children on roll at a Reading nursery school/early years setting in September 2026 will receive information about how to apply in November 2026.

Children living in Reading and attending an infant school will be sent information about the application process for admission to a junior school.

Parents/carers are encouraged to apply online via the Reading Parent Portal. The site will be open from **1 November 2026 until 15 January 2027**.

Parents/carers will be invited to list four schools and rank them in order of preference. Parents/carers may also give reasons for their preferences. Parents/carers may list any state schools, including those outside the local authority; this includes academies, voluntary aided and voluntary controlled Schools.

The Reading common application form (and the online terms and conditions) will include a statement requiring parents to confirm they have read the *Guide for Parents and Carers* and accept the policies and procedures in that document.

Parents/carers should return their completed forms directly to the school admissions team at **Reading Borough Council**.

Parents/carers will complete the common application form online by the agreed deadline. The school admissions team will validate the application address. Validation, where possible, will be by reference to Council Tax data held by the **Council**. Where this is not possible, proof of residence will be required in the form of ownership documents or tenancy agreement.

Where, as part of its admission arrangements, a school requires additional information, parents/carers may also choose to complete a supplementary form to support their application. This should be submitted separately to the school. The *Guide for Parents and Carers* will identify those Reading schools for which a supplementary form may be necessary. These forms will be available from **the relevant Reading Borough Council website**. Supplementary forms are not applications and parent/carers must apply to Reading school admissions either on the common application form or online.

The National Closing Date is **15 January 2027**.

Coordinated Admissions scheme for Reading Borough Council Primary, Infant and Junior Schools for the **2027/2028** academic year.

Late Applications

Applications received after the closing date will be treated as 'late' applications. However, if the late submission of the application is caused by extenuating circumstances, (e.g. sudden illness or death of a close family member or the family having very recently moved to the area) the application may be accepted as "on time". The reason for late submission must be supported with documentary evidence received before **1 February 2027**.

Where no evidence is provided, it will be assumed that the application could reasonably have been submitted by the closing date. In such cases, the application will be treated as late and considered after all on time applications have been allocated.

All applications received from the 2 February are considered late and will be passed to the appropriate admission authority in Reading (or to the appropriate local authority) approximately two weeks after National Offer Day.

In these cases, parents/carers will be informed about the outcome of their application as per the timetable below, after National Offer Day. Unsuccessful applications for oversubscribed schools will be added to the waiting lists of those schools and ranked according to their oversubscription criteria.

Late applications will be processed approximately two weeks after national offer day. The first round of post-National Offer Day allocations will be at the end of May **2027 (This is Subject to change)**. After this date late application will be processed regularly. In each case, the cut-off date for consideration in each round of allocations will be 1 week prior to the allocation date.

Changes of preference

Where the parent/carer wishes to change their preferences, they must submit a new application form (paper or online). If received by the school admissions team before **15 January 2027** it will be accepted as on time and will replace any previous application. Any preferences to be retained from a previous application should be listed on subsequent applications.

Any change of preference after the 15 January must be done so by emailing the Reading School Admissions Team.

Changes of preference received after **15 January 2027** will be treated as late applications in the way described above. However, applications for late change of preference where there are extenuating circumstances (e.g. sudden illness or death of a close family member or the family having very recently moved to the area) may be treated as on time, provided written evidence is supplied to support the late submission. This should be received by the school

admissions team before **1 February 2027**. If no evidence is provided, the application will be treated as late. Any application for change of preference(s) received after **1 February 2027** will replace any previous application and be marked as late.

Parents are advised to think very carefully about submitting an application after this date, particularly if **they** have already submitted an on-time application.

Approximately two weeks after National Offer Day, late changes of preferences will be passed to the appropriate admission authority in Reading or to the appropriate local authority to be considered.

Change of Address

As required by the School Admissions Code 2021, changes of address made after **15 January and before 1 February 2027** may be considered as on time. If an applicant changes address after **1 February 2027** they will need to submit a new application, based on the new address. The new application will be marked as late, and their previous application may be withdrawn. Documentary evidence of the change of address will be required.

Processing Applications

Exchange of information

As per the timetable below, the Reading school admissions team will forward applications to other local authorities and admission authorities in Reading. At the same time other local authorities will forward applications to Reading for their residents to be considered for Reading schools.

Depending on the arrangements agreed with the governing body of each school, the school admissions team will provide the school with relevant information to enable them to rank against their oversubscription criteria, as per the timetable. Reading school admissions will not pass on the details of the parent/carer's preference ranking to the school, and no school will be told about other schools a parent has listed.

As per the timetable, each admission authority in Reading will rank the applications according to their published oversubscription criteria and return ranked lists to the school admissions team.

Resolving multiple offers

As per the timetable, Reading school admissions will inform other local authorities of places offered in Reading schools to their residents. During the exchange of information, Reading school admissions will consider all cases where a child can be offered more than one of their preferences. In such cases, a place offered will be at the school a parent/carer listed highest in preference.

Coordinated Admissions scheme for Reading Borough Council Primary, Infant and Junior Schools for the **2027/2028** academic year.

If a place cannot be offered at one of the preferred schools listed by the parent/carer, a place will normally be offered at the nearest school in the borough of Reading with a place available. If the offered school is one where Reading Borough Council is not the admission authority, this will be in consultation with the governing body of the school in question. If the nearest school with places is a faith school, parents/carers will be offered this as an option. Should the parent/carer be unhappy with a faith school being offered, they will be informed of other schools with available spaces (which may be further from their home).

Where no places are available at any Reading schools, parents/carers will be informed, and alternative schools (outside Reading Borough) may be offered. Such an offer will depend on availability and the agreement of the appropriate admission authority. This will not preclude parents/carers from requesting an alternative school, nor from lodging an appeal for their preferred school with the admission authority.

Informing schools

As per the timetable, the school admissions team will send each Reading primary and infant school a list of pupils to be offered a place at their school. This will be confidential to the school and must not be passed on to parents/carers.

Informing Parents

On **National Offer Day**, parents/carers who submitted an 'on time' online application will receive an email with a formal offer and may view their offer online.

Parents/carers who submitted a paper application **and provided an email address will also receive an email with a formal offer. Any paper applications without an email address will receive details of their offer by letter (posted 2nd Class).**

The letter will:

- Inform parents/carers of their child's offered school.
- Inform parents/carers how to accept the offer and the deadline for accepting.
- Provide information on school transport.

If the school offered is not their first preference, parents/carers will also be supplied with the following information:

- Where they can find information showing how places were allocated at oversubscribed schools in Reading.
- How to submit an appeal.
- If the place offered is not their highest preference school(s), the child's name will be added to the waiting list(s) of any school(s) they listed higher in preference.

Parents/carers are required to advise Reading school admissions if they do not wish their child's name to remain on a waiting list.

Waiting Lists

Two weeks after National Offer Day, 'waiting lists' will be administered for schools with more applicants than places available. A child's position on a waiting list is determined by the oversubscription criteria of the school. When a place becomes available, it will be offered to the child who is top of the waiting list. A child's position on a waiting list may go up or down for several reasons (e.g. pupil withdrawals or new and revised applications). When a place is allocated from the waiting list, the child's current allocation (for a lower preference school) will be removed and allocated to another student, if appropriate. It is the responsibility of the parent to inform the school admissions team if they no longer wish for their child to remain on the waiting list of a school. It will be assumed that a child is to remain on the waiting list of all schools listed higher in preference to one offered (unless the parent/carer indicates otherwise).

Waiting lists for all schools in the Reading Borough, will be kept until **31 August 2028**. After this date, the policy of the individual school(s) will be followed. When the coordinated admissions round ends, on **31 August 2027**, waiting lists will continue to be managed as part of the In-Year admissions process and follow the individual policy of the school.

Withdrawing a place

If the offered place is not accepted within four weeks of national offer day, Reading school admissions will send a reminder and allow a further seven days for a reply. If there is still no response, the offer may be withdrawn. If it arises that a school offer was based on fraudulent, or intentionally misleading information (which denied the place to another child), the place will be withdrawn.

Requests for admission outside the normal age group

Parents/carers may request their child be admitted outside the year group suggested by the child's date of birth (i.e. admission to Reception, rather than Year 1, in **September 2028**). In such cases, applicants should apply using the common application form by **15 January 2027**. They should **also** complete the offset request form (having read the separate guide). The offset request form should be submitted to the school admissions team before **1 February 2027** to be considered prior to National Offer Day. The application will be forwarded to the relevant admissions authority of the listed schools for consideration and the school admissions team will seek the views of the child's early years setting. Each case will be carefully considered by the admissions authority. Parents/carers will be informed of the decision in writing before the National Offer Day, setting out clearly the reasons for the decision. Any request received after **1 February 2027** will be processed after National Offer Day.

If the offset request is agreed, parents/carers must formally accept it. Following this, their application submitted for **September 2027** is withdrawn. Parents/carers are not told which school their child was allocated before accepting/declining the offset. A new application must then be submitted in the following year for entry from **September 2028**.

Requests for schools outside Reading will be referred to the relevant local authority for consideration under that Council's scheme.

One admission authority cannot be required to honour a decision made by another admission authority on admission outside the normal age group. Therefore, if an application for **2028** entry lists different schools to the application withdrawn in **2027**, it will (if required) be forwarded to different admissions authorities for their consideration. Where this is the case, the offset request form must be resubmitted.

Disputes between Parents

Anyone with parental responsibility may apply for their child's school place and list up to four preferred schools. However, the child's address on the application should be recorded as the place they spend most of the week as set out in our definition of 'Home Address'.

When completing application forms, parents/carers must tick to confirm they have parental responsibility for the child and that their application is made with the agreement of all parties having parental responsibility.

Where parents disagree over which school preferences should be named, we recommend starting the following process as early as possible as national closing dates are fixed and cannot be extended under any circumstances:

- We urge parents to work together in the best interests of their child, and it is advised that the applicant should inform all other parties who have parental responsibility before submitting the application.
- All parties should agree with the school preferences to be listed. Any disagreements should be resolved before an application is submitted.
- If parents are unable to reach an amicable agreement, they should seek legal advice or recourse through the Family Court.

The local authority will only process one application per child and will only make one offer of a school place.

Where more than one application is received, the local authority (or local authorities if parents submit applications to more than one) will contact both applicants to advise that more than one application has been received, and request they complete one application with one set of preferences for their child.

All evidence must be received by published closing dates, at which point a decision will be made as to which application is processed. The local authorities concerned may contact early years or education settings noted in the application, or other professionals working

with the child where applicable, to assist in their decision making. Any evidence provided after the closing date which affects the content or processing of the application, may render the application late, and delay an offer of a school place.

We will not mediate between parents where there is a dispute. Only one application will be accepted, and the final decision will rest with the local authority after all submitted evidence has been considered.

In-Year Admissions

The In-Year admissions arrangements for the school year, September **2027** - July **2028** will use the determined policies of **2027/2028**.

Parents/carers seeking admission for their child into Year 1 – Year 6 of a primary/infant or junior school in Reading Borough must apply to Reading school admissions. Parents/carers may apply direct to some voluntary-aided, academy or free schools in the Borough, however, most of these schools have opted to be part of the coordinated admission arrangements and applications are normally submitted to the Reading school admissions team. A list of schools to which a direct application is necessary is available from the [relevant Reading Borough Council website](#). Where a school listed is in another local authority, the parent/carer will be advised to apply directly to that local authority, and the application for that school will follow the relevant local authority's scheme.

Timetable for the Primary & Junior School Admissions Round **2027-2028**

Action	Date
<i>Guide for Parents and Carers to be placed on Website.</i>	By 2 September 2026
Information sent to Early Years Providers to share with parent (date can be subject to change)	By 1 November 2026
Online Reading Parent Portal for admissions open. (opening date can be subject to change)	1 November 2026 – 15 January 2027
National Closing date for receipt of applications.	15 January 2027
Late/change of preference applications accepted in extenuating circumstances, written support must be submitted at time of application.	1 February 2027
Application details sent to voluntary-aided/Academies schools in Reading and other local authorities. Own Admissions Authority schools to provide Reading school admissions team with a list of children ranked according to the school's oversubscription criteria.	During February 2027
Coordination between other local authorities of offers that can be made to their residents in Reading schools.	By 2 April 2027

Coordinated Admissions scheme for Reading Borough Council Primary, Infant and Junior Schools for the **2027/2028** academic year.

Action	Date
National Offer Day - Offer notifications sent to Reading Residents	16 April 2027
Deadline for parents to accept.	1 May 2027
Late applications for over-subscribed schools added to the waiting lists/change of preferences processed.	From 3 May 2027
Coordination with other LA's ends.	31 August 2027
Waiting lists held for Reading schools.	Until at least 31 July 2028

Coordinated Admissions scheme for Reading Borough Council Primary, Infant and Junior Schools for the 2027/2028 academic year.

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**ADMISSION POLICY FOR COMMUNITY INFANT, JUNIOR
AND
PRIMARY SCHOOLS 2027-2028**

For September **2027** entry
Determined on

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Introduction

Reading Borough Council is the admission authority for community and voluntary controlled schools within the borough.

~~Reading Borough Council delivers its school admissions service through Brighter Futures for Children (BFFC). BFFC is an independent, not-for-profit company, wholly owned by Reading Borough Council, set up in December 2018 to deliver children's services, early help, education and SEND services in Reading.~~

This document sets out the local authority's admission arrangements for entry to schools in September **2027**.

The Reading coordinated scheme was ~~last~~ consulted between **17 October and the 28 November 2025**. ~~There have been no significant changes since that consultation took place, therefore no requirement for a public consultation.~~

These arrangements comply with the School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Coordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, the School Admissions Code 2021 and the School Admissions Appeals Code 2021.

Other admitting authorities within Reading Borough Council

Voluntary aided schools, free schools and academies are their own admission authorities and are required to publish their own proposals for consultation (if required) and determine their own admissions arrangements. Details of their proposals and/or determined arrangements should be obtained from each individual school.

National Offer Day for Primary and Junior Admissions is **16 April 2027**

Cohort

Applications for children born between **1-9-2022** and **31-8-2023** will be considered for admission to a reception class in **2027** as part of the **2027/2028** routine admission round.

Applications for admission to junior schools in September **2027** will be considered for those born between **1-9-2019** and **31-8-2020**.

Admission of children outside the normal age to Reading Borough Council Community Primary Schools

Children are normally allocated school places according to their chronological age. However, parents may request their child be placed outside of their normal age group, for example, if the child has experienced problems such as ill health or special educational health needs but does not have an Educational Health Care Plan. In addition, the parents of a summer born child may choose not to send that child to school until the September following their fifth birthday and may request that they are admitted out of their normal age group; to Reception rather than Year 1, in September **2028**.

Reading Borough Council, as the Admission Authority for community primary schools, will consider each case individually and determine what is in the best interest of the child, taking account of:

- The parent's/carer's views.
- Information about the child's academic, social, and emotional development from their current setting.
- The child's medical history and the views of a medical professional (where relevant).
- Whether the child has previously been educated out of their normal age group.
- Whether the child may have fallen into a lower age group had they not been born prematurely.
- DfE document 'Advice on the admission of summer born children'.
- DfE document 'School Admissions Code'
- LGO document 'Summer born admissions'.
- The views of the head teacher at the school(s) concerned
- The views of the child's early years setting (if attending one)

To request a child's admission be delayed to September 2028, parents/carers need to read the offset guide and complete the required form. It is recommended they make an application for a reception place in the normal way for September 2027 by 15 January 2027 so that the application can be considered. Each case will be reviewed, and parents/carers will be informed of the decision in writing before the National Offer Day, setting out clearly the reasons for the decision. If the request to delay admission is agreed, the parents/carers must issue a formal acceptance, declaring their intention to proceed on this basis. In this case, the application submitted for September 2027 entry will be withdrawn (before a reception place is offered) and a new application must then be submitted (for entry in September 2028) when the next primary admissions round opens in November 2027.

Parents/carers will not be made aware of the school they would have been allocated before the decision is accepted or declined. The decision made by Reading school admissions panel is not binding on any other Admission Authority and therefore schools may come to different decisions based on the evidence. If the request is refused, parents must decide whether to accept the offered place for Reception 2027 or refuse it and make an in-year application for a Year 1 place in September 2028.

Oversubscription Criteria for Community Primary and Infant Schools

Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) naming a community primary or infant school will be allocated a place above all other children.

The oversubscription criteria take no account of the parent's/carers order of preference. Applications for each school named by the parents/carers will be ranked according to the criteria set out below if there are more applications than places available.

Category		Notes
1	A 'looked after child' or a child who was previously looked after but immediately after being looked after became subject to an adoption, child arrangements, or special guardianship order including those who appear [to the admission authority] to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted. A looked after child is a child who is (a) in the care of a local authority, or (b) being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions (see the definition in Section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989).	Provided appropriate evidence is submitted – See Note 1.
2	Families who have strong medical or social grounds for their child's admission to a particular school.	See Note 2.
3	Children whose permanent home address is in the catchment area of the school and have a sibling at the school at the time of application, who is expected to be attending the school when the child is due to start school.	This category may apply in other circumstances - See Notes 3 and 4.
4	Children whose permanent home address is in the catchment area of the school.	
5	Children whose permanent home address is not in the catchment area of the school but have a sibling at the school at the time of application, who is expected to be attending the school when the child is due to start school.	See Note 4.
6	Children in receipt of Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) at the time application who attends the nursery unit at the school.	
7	Other Children	

Priority within the Oversubscription Criteria

Within each of the above categories 1-5 and 7, priority will be given to children who are in receipt of the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP), Service Premium or Pupil Premium (PP) at the time of application. To be considered for these priorities, parents/carers will be required to complete a Supplementary Information Form which **must be endorsed by the child's current school or nursery** confirming that they receive Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP), Service Premium or Pupil Premium (PP) for the child. This form must be completed and returned to the school admissions team prior to **1 February 2027** in order that this priority may be awarded on time for the routine admissions round. Any applications received later than this date will be awarded the priority after national offer day.

Oversubscription Criteria for Community Junior Schools – Geoffrey Field Junior School

Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) naming the school will be allocated a place above all other children.

The oversubscription criteria take no account of the parents/carers order of preference and applications for each school named by the parents/carers will be ranked according to the criteria set out below if there are more applications than places available.

Older siblings still attending the linked junior school will be considered as siblings for admission to the infant school.

Category		Notes
1	A 'looked after child' or a child who was previously looked after but immediately after being looked after became subject to an adoption, child arrangements, or special guardianship order ⁹¹ including those who appear [to the admission authority] to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted. A looked after child is a child who is (a) in the care of a local authority, or (b) being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions (see the definition in Section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989).	Provided appropriate evidence is submitted – See Note 1.
2	Families who have strong medical or social grounds for their child's admission to a particular school.	See Note 2.
3	Children whose permanent home address is in the catchment area of the school and have a sibling at the school, or Geoffrey Field Infant School at the time of application who is expected to be attending the school when the child is due to start school.	This category may apply in other circumstances - See Notes 3 and 4.
4	Children whose permanent home address is in the catchment area of the school.	
5	Children whose permanent home address is not in the catchment area of the school but have a sibling at the school or Geoffrey Field Infant School at the time of application, who is expected to be attending the school when the child is due to start school.	See Note 4.
6	Children who are attending Geoffrey Field Infant School at the time of application.	
7	Other Children.	

Priority within the oversubscription criteria

Within each of the above categories 1-5 and 7, priority will be given to children who are in receipt of the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP), Service Premium or Pupil Premium (PP) at the time of application. To be considered for these priorities, parents/carers will be required to complete a Supplementary Information Form which **must be endorsed by the child's current school** confirming that they receive Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP), Service Premium or Pupil Premium (PP) for the child. This form must be completed and returned to the school admissions team prior to 1 February **2027** in order that this priority may be awarded on time for the routine admissions round. Any applications received later than this date will be awarded the priority after national offer day.

Notes relating to the above oversubscription criteria.

Note 1 – Category 1 – Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children

A 'Looked After' child is a) in the care of a local authority, or b) being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions as defined in Section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989 at the time of making an application for a school place.

A previously 'Looked After' child is a child who was looked after but has been adopted or became subject to a child arrangement order or special guardianship order immediately following having been 'Looked After'. Confirmation will be required from the local authority that last looked after the child that the child was looked after immediately prior to the issuing of one of the following orders:

An adoption order is an order under the Adoption Act 1976 (see Section 12 adoption orders) and children who were adopted under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (see Section 46 adoption orders).

A 'child arrangements order' is an order settling the arrangements to be made as to the person with whom the child is to live under Section 8 of the Children Act 1989 as amended by Section 14 of the Children and Families Act 2014.

Section 14A of the Children Act 1989 defines a 'special guardianship order' as an order appointing one or more individuals to be a child's special guardian (or special guardians).

Children who were previously in state care outside England

A child is regarded as having been in state care outside of England if they were in the care of, or were accommodated by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other provider of care whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society.

The care may have been provided in an orphanage or other setting, but the child may have been adopted and is no longer in state care. Evidence of the previously looked after status and/or the adoption will be requested. Where such evidence is not available, the admissions authority will work closely with **Reading Borough Council** Virtual School for Children Looked After to make a pragmatic decision based on the information available to ensure a consistent local approach.

Note 2 – Category 2 Medical/Social Reasons

When applying under criterion 2, families who have strong medical or social grounds for their child's admission to a particular school must provide written evidence. This should come from an independent professional aware of the case relating to the child, parent/carer or other children living at the same address (e.g. doctor, hospital consultant or psychologist for medical grounds or registered social or care worker, housing officer, the police or probation officer for social needs). This evidence must: be specific to the school in question, show why that school is the most suitable, what facilities will benefit the child, and why no other school can offer the same support. It is not enough for the professional to report what the parent/carer has told them.

If failure in awarding this priority would result in no appropriate school being allocated, the panel, after taking considering the evidence submitted, the parental preference and the catchment school, will allow categorization of medical/social grounds to the most appropriate school. This applies to those children whose social/medical needs can be met by more than one school but not many schools. For example, when reasons are due to mobility issues and a number of schools are equal distance and failure to award this would result in no appropriate school being allocated.

In addition, this category includes children who are subject to a child arrangement order or special guardianship order awarded to a family member in order to prevent the child being taken into care by a local authority. A copy of the order must be provided.

No individual officer will take responsibility for determining whether a case is ranked in the category. A panel of officers in the form of the School Admissions Panel will make the final decision. Evidence must be provided by **1 February 2027** to be considered as on time for National Offer Day. If evidence is received by the team after this date, then it is at the discretion of the panel whether to accept these documents for 'on time' allocations. The admissions team will not prompt parents to send evidence to support admission under this category, but they may ask for further evidence if this is required to make a decision. If evidence is received before the **1 February 2027** parents will be informed in writing, before National Offer Day as to whether this has been granted. This is not a guarantee of a place at a particular school.

Note 3 – Category 3 – Siblings

Children whose home address is in the former catchment area of a school and have a sibling at the school and that sibling was admitted to the school from the same address will be treated as category 4 of the oversubscription criteria.

Note 4 – Category 3 – Siblings

If parents/carers applied for a place at their catchment area school for their child and it was not possible to offer a place at that school because the school was oversubscribed, a sibling protection applies. Where the child was admitted to a lower preference Reading community primary school or allocated a place by the authority at an alternative Reading community primary school, the application for any younger siblings for that school will be treated as 'catchment area' and considered under category 4. Where a parent does not list all schools

in the catchment area for the home address at the time of application and a place would have been offered at a catchment area school had it been listed, they forfeit the right to sibling protection. Parents/carers must inform the admissions team at the time of application if they consider this exemption applies.

Where a space is allocated as part of an in-year admission at a school listed second preference or lower, or if a school closer to the child's home address was available to parents and was refused, parents forfeit the right to this sibling protection for future admissions. Parents will be informed at the time of allocation if this right has been forfeited.

Catchment area

The catchment area of the schools can be seen from attached maps. These are a guide only. Exact catchment area information for individual addresses can be found on Reading Borough Council's website <https://my.reading.gov.uk/>

Tiebreaker

If a school does not have enough places for all children in a particular category, places will be allocated to those living nearest the school. The distance is measured in miles as a straight line between the Ordnance Survey data point for the child's home address and the school using Reading Borough Council digital mapping software. This distance is measured to three decimal places. In the rare event that it is not possible to decide between the applications of those pupils who have the same distance measurement, the place will be offered using random allocation. A member of Committee Services staff for Reading Borough Council will supervise the selection process.

Multiple births (twins, triplets etc.)

Places are offered according to the oversubscription criteria. However, where this would result in splitting children of multiple births, the other sibling(s) will be offered a place in most cases. In very exceptional circumstances, where the admission of more than one additional child to the year group causes prejudice to the provision of efficient education and efficient use of resources, it may not be possible to offer a place to all multiple birth children.

In cases where siblings attending the same year group, but with different birth dates are split by the oversubscription criteria, only one child will be offered a place. This applies to children during Key stage 1 (up to and including Year 2) if admission would take a class over 30 pupils. Selection will be made randomly by a representative of Reading Borough Council's Committee Services. The parents may decline the offer and seek places for all siblings at another school or accept the place for one of the siblings. In the latter case, the other sibling's name(s) will be added to the waiting list. If admission is in Key Stage 2, or the admission of the other siblings will not contravene infant class size regulations, then each case will be considered. Often, the other child/children will be offered a place (on the condition that the admission will not prejudice the provision of efficient education and efficient use of resources).

Parent/Carers

A parent/carer is any person who has parental responsibility or care of the child. Parental responsibility for a child is set out in the Children Act 1989. Normally this parent/carer would reside with the child at the permanent home address stated on the application.

Home address

Applications are processed based on the child's single permanent home address where the child lives, with parent(s) or a carer/legal guardian, on the closing date for applications. By applying, the parent/carer/legal guardian is confirming the child will be living at that address on National Offer Day. An address will not be accepted where the child is resident, other than with a parent or carer, unless it is part of a private fostering or formal care arrangement.

Checks will be made to determine whether an address declared on the application form is that of a second home, with the main home being elsewhere. Some residential arrangements will be considered temporary. In such cases, the School Admissions Team will examine available evidence to determine whether, on balance, the declared home address may be considered the child's permanent home for the purpose of admission. Any circumstance where the declared address is to be accepted as the permanent home, despite another home being owned or otherwise available for occupation, should be declared at the point of application. Without being exhaustive these this might include:

- an owned property being a considerable distance from the preferred school, indicating that the family had permanently relocated to the new home; or
- an owned property that is uninhabitable and cannot reasonably be made habitable in the period leading up to admission to the school; or
- an owned property that is in the process of being sold and the family live permanently in the declared property; or
- a situation, following divorce or separation, where the family home cannot be occupied by the applicant or otherwise treated as the child's permanent home.

Where the declared address is rented and the applicant has no claim on any other property, the declared address may be considered temporary if there is evidence to suggest the applicant has chosen to rent the property solely for the period necessary for their child to be admitted to a particular school.

Reference to Reading Borough Council tax records will be made to determine a single address for consideration of a place under criteria 4 or 5. It is for the applicant to satisfy the admissions authority that they live at the address stated.

Applicants will be asked to declare that the address used is expected to be their place of residence beyond the date of the pupil starting school. Applicants are required to advise of any change of circumstance at any time prior to the child starting school. If the applicant does not declare such arrangements (or a different address is used on the application where the child does not usually live), it will be considered that a false declaration has been made.

This may result in a decision being taken to decline to offer a place at a particular school, or to withdraw the offer of a place. In deciding whether an allocation was based on a misleading or fraudulent application, an admissions panel will consider any supporting evidence giving reasons why the move was necessary prior to the child starting school.

It is important to declare if there is to be a change of address prior to the child starting school. If the applicant already owns a property which is in the process of being sold, the admissions team are able to accept the address of the new property only on submission of the appropriate evidence in support (e.g. completion of contracts letter on both the new property and, where possible, disposal of their current property). The deadline for submission of evidence to support a move is **1 February 2027**.

If the applicant is renting the property, the tenancy agreement must be dated **1 February 2027** or prior, to be accepted as on time. If the tenancy agreement expires prior to National Offer Day, the applicant must provide evidence showing that they still reside at the property past that date. If the applicant moves to a new rented property after the **1 February 2027**, the application will be marked late and considered after National Offer Day.

A temporary address cannot be used to obtain a school place. Temporary addresses will only be considered where evidence is provided of a genuine reason for the move e.g. flooding or subsidence.

Reading school admissions reserves its right to carry out further investigation, request additional evidence and to reject applications (or withdraw offers of places) if it believes it has the grounds to do so. In such cases, the applicant will have recourse to the independent appeals process. Where it is believed an address provided is not the only address, the Corporate Audit & Investigation Team may be called upon to investigate further.

Split living arrangements

Where a family claims to be resident at more than one address, justification and evidence of the family's circumstances will be required (e.g. formal residence order, child arrangements order or legal separation documentation). The application must be completed by the parent using the address which is owned, leased or rented and where the child lives for the majority of the school week. This is based on the number of school nights a child spends at the address (from Sunday at 6pm to Friday at 9am).

Where children live across two addresses, families cannot use whichever address would advantage their child's admission into a certain school.

Where there is an equal split or there is any doubt about residence, the School Admissions Team will assess and make a judgment about which address to use for the purpose of allocating a school place. Where necessary, further information may be requested, for example:

- any legal documentation confirming residence
- the pattern of residence

- the duration of the current arrangement
- confirmation from the current school or early years setting of the primary contact details and home address supplied to it by the parents
- the address where child benefit or other benefit (if applicable) is paid
- where the child is registered with their GP
- any other evidence the parents may supply to verify the position.

It is recommended that consensus is reached by both parties (and the child) regarding the school preferences listed. It should be noted that only one offer letter will be sent to the main applicant, unless otherwise requested and agreed by both parties.

The information provided to determine the home address will be considered by an admissions panel of at least two officers and their decision is final.

Siblings

For the purposes of admissions criteria during the main primary admission round, 'siblings' are older siblings already attending the preferred school. However, Geoffrey Field Junior School will consider a younger sibling attending Geoffrey Field Infant School. In-year applications will consider younger siblings, but not a sibling attending the nursery class of a school.

Siblings are children who have the same parent (or stepparent/cohabiting parent) and live together as a family unit at the same permanent home address. If they do not live at the same address, then they are not treated as siblings for the purpose of admission.

A child who is part of a multiple birth (e.g., twins) is not classed a sibling for the purpose of ranking by oversubscription criteria. However, where application of the oversubscription criteria would result in splitting children from a multiple birth, the other child/children will usually be admitted to the school.

Deferring a Place

Upon receipt of an application, the local authority is legally required to offer every child a full-time Reception place to start in the September following their fourth birthday. In Reading schools, places are offered on a full-time basis from September 2027 as a "rising 5" admission. Children do not reach statutory (compulsory) school age until the September, January or April following their fifth birthday. When children are offered "rising 5" places, parents/carers may decide to defer their child's start until January 2028 or April 2028 (depending on their child's birth date). In such cases, the offered school must hold the child's place. However, schools are not obliged to hold a place where a parent/carer wishes to defer beyond April 2028 (i.e., September 2028) as this pushes the child's start into the following academic year. Any parent/carer wishing to defer entry to September 2028 (i.e. to miss out Reception entirely and start their child in Year 1) must forfeit their child's

September 2027 school offer and re-apply for a Year 1 place in July 2028. They should also consider that places may not be available if their preferred school has become oversubscribed by this time.

Part Time Admissions

Parents/carers may request their child be admitted on a part time basis for an initial period (but not beyond the point at which their child reaches compulsory school age). Where a parent/carer chooses this option, they cannot insist on part-time provision that is individually tailored to their needs. Parents/carers must consult with the Headteacher of the allocated school to agree the best arrangement for both child and school.

Waiting Lists

Approximately two weeks after National Offer Day 'waiting lists' will be created for Reading schools. Children will be added to the waiting list of any school their parents/carers listed higher in preference to the school they were offered. A child's position on the waiting list is determined by the oversubscription criteria. The list will be re-ranked whenever new children are added following late applications or changes of preference. When a place becomes available, it is offered to the child ranked highest on the waiting list. After 1 September 2027, children identified for placement as part of the Fair Access Protocol can be placed above those on the waiting list. Positions on the waiting lists may go up or down due to pupil withdrawals, new or revised applications. Reading school admissions will keep waiting lists until end of July 2028 (end of Term 6 for Reception classes). After this date, the waiting lists will be abandoned. Parents/carers must then re-apply for a place in Year 1 as an in-year admissions applicant if they are still interested in obtaining a place for their child.

Returning Crown Servants and Armed Forces Personnel

Families of Crown servants returning from overseas to live in the Reading Borough or applicants relocating in the armed forces may apply for a place in advance of their move provided the application is accompanied by an official letter confirming the posting to the UK and the expected relocation date. A school will be offered in advance of a move and held until the appropriate time. If the schools listed on an application form are oversubscribed, the family will need to provide an address to be ranked accordingly.

Where a parent is unable to provide confirmation of a relocation address, an indication of the area may be provided, narrowed down as far as possible, to which the family intend to return. Preferences will be processed but applications will be considered under criterion 7 (other children) until the parent is able to provide confirmation of the new address (e.g. proof of exchange of contracts or a signed rental agreement). If a place cannot be offered at a preferred school, an alternative school will be offered, and parents will be advised of the right of appeal for a place at the preferred school. It is the responsibility of parents to keep the school admissions team informed of any changes to their planned address during the application process.

In-Year Admission Arrangements for the School Year 2027-2028.

The In- Year admissions arrangements for the school year, **September 2027- July 2028** will use the determined policies of **2027/2028**.

Parents/carers seeking admission for their child into Year 1 – Year 6 in a community primary school in Reading Borough, must apply to Reading school admissions using the In-Year Application form. Parents/carers may apply direct to some voluntary-aided or academy schools in the Borough, but most of these schools have opted to be part of the coordinated admission arrangements and applications are normally submitted to the Reading school admissions team. A list of those schools to which a direct application is necessary is available from the website.

If there is a place in the parent's/carer's preferred school, the place will be allocated, however, if there are more applications than places available the oversubscription criteria (as outlined above) will apply with places allocated to the child(ren) ranked highest. **Please note, for in-year admissions Category 6 of the Oversubscription Criteria for Community Primary and Infant Schools does not apply.** The remaining applicants will be added to the waiting list which will also be ranked according to the oversubscription criteria. Children allocated according to the Fair Access Protocol will take precedent over children on the waiting list.

Those children new to the area, or who have moved within the borough, will be able to start at the school as soon as possible after their move. If the request is to move schools within the borough without a move of home, these children will normally be expected to start at the beginning of the following term.

Waiting lists for admission in Years 1 to 6 will be held until 31 December **2027** after which parents/carers must reapply for their child to remain on the waiting list until July **2028**. The waiting list will be abandoned after 31 July **2028** and parents/carers must reapply if they are still seeking a place for September **2028**.

Appeals

If it is not possible to offer a place at the preferred school(s), parents/carers will be advised of their right of appeal.

Admissions Numbers – Reading Community Infant, Junior and Primary Schools.The following are the proposed admission numbers for **2027**

School	September 2027 - Admission Number
Alfred Sutton Primary	90
Caversham Park Primary	30
Caversham Primary	60
Coley Primary	30
Emmer Green Primary	60
EP Collier Primary	60
Geoffrey Field Infant	90
Geoffrey Field Junior	90
Katesgrove Primary	90
Manor Primary	45
Micklands Primary	30
Moorlands Primary	30 (consultation to reduce the pan)
Oxford Road Community	30
Park Lane Primary	60
Redlands Primary	30
Southcote Primary	90
St Michael's Primary	60
Thameside Primary	60
The Hill Primary	60
The Ridgeway Primary	60
Whitley Park Primary School	60
Wilson Primary	60

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**Primary Schools Designated Areas (Catchments) for
Primary, Infant and Junior Schools in Reading for the
2027/2028 academic year.**

For September 2027 entry

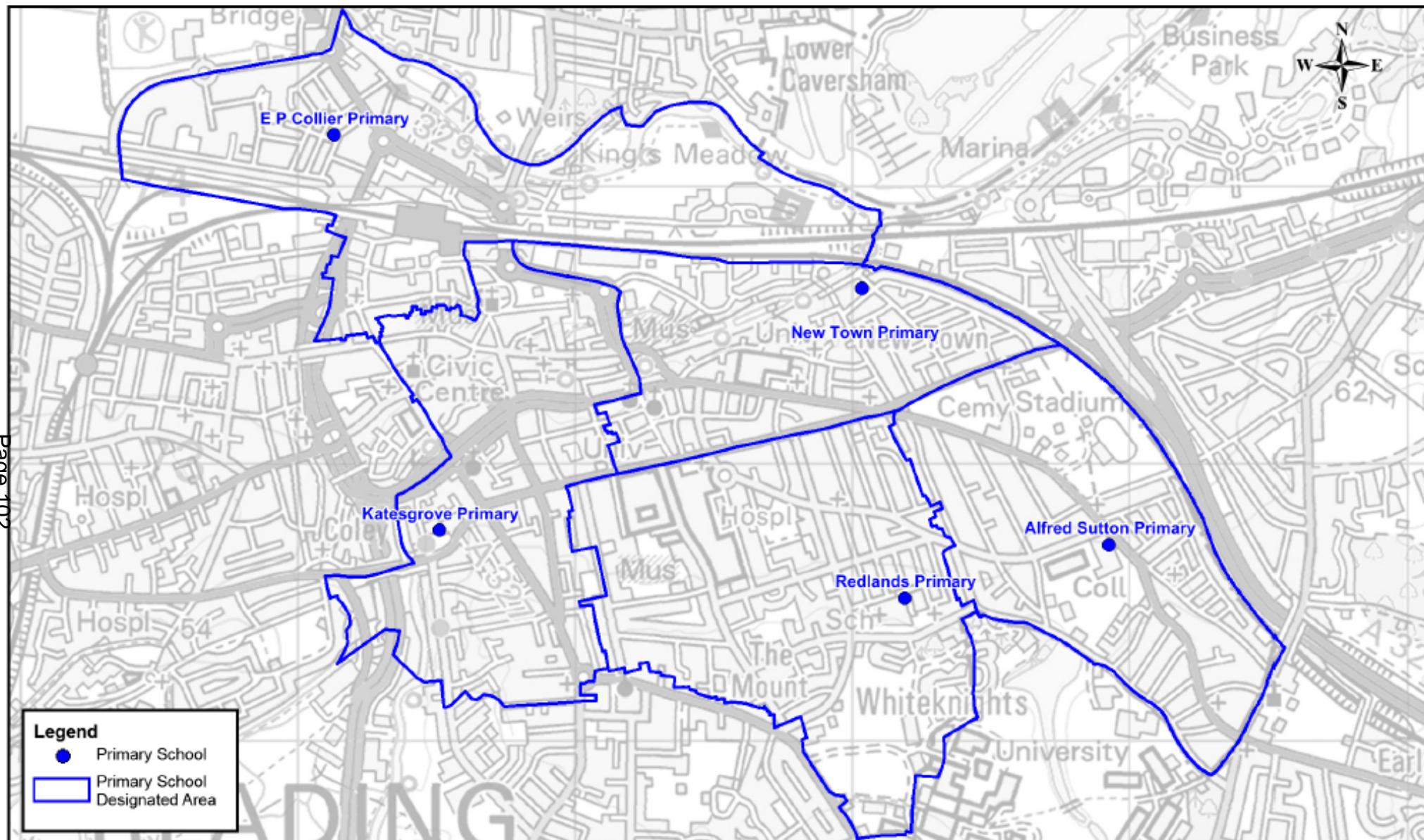
Determined on

The maps on the following pages show the primary school catchment areas. It includes catchments for Reading Borough Council maintained and other state maintained schools.

Please note, not all schools have a catchment area.

Some areas do not have a catchment school due to schools removing the catchment criteria from their policy.

The maps do not include parish catchments for schools. A parish catchment is an address which falls in the area of an ecclesiastical parish church.



Title: Primary Schools Designated Areas

Central and East Reading

Drg.No.: GIS00015

Date: 09/08/2018 Scale at A4: 1:18500

Produced by GIS & Mapping Services

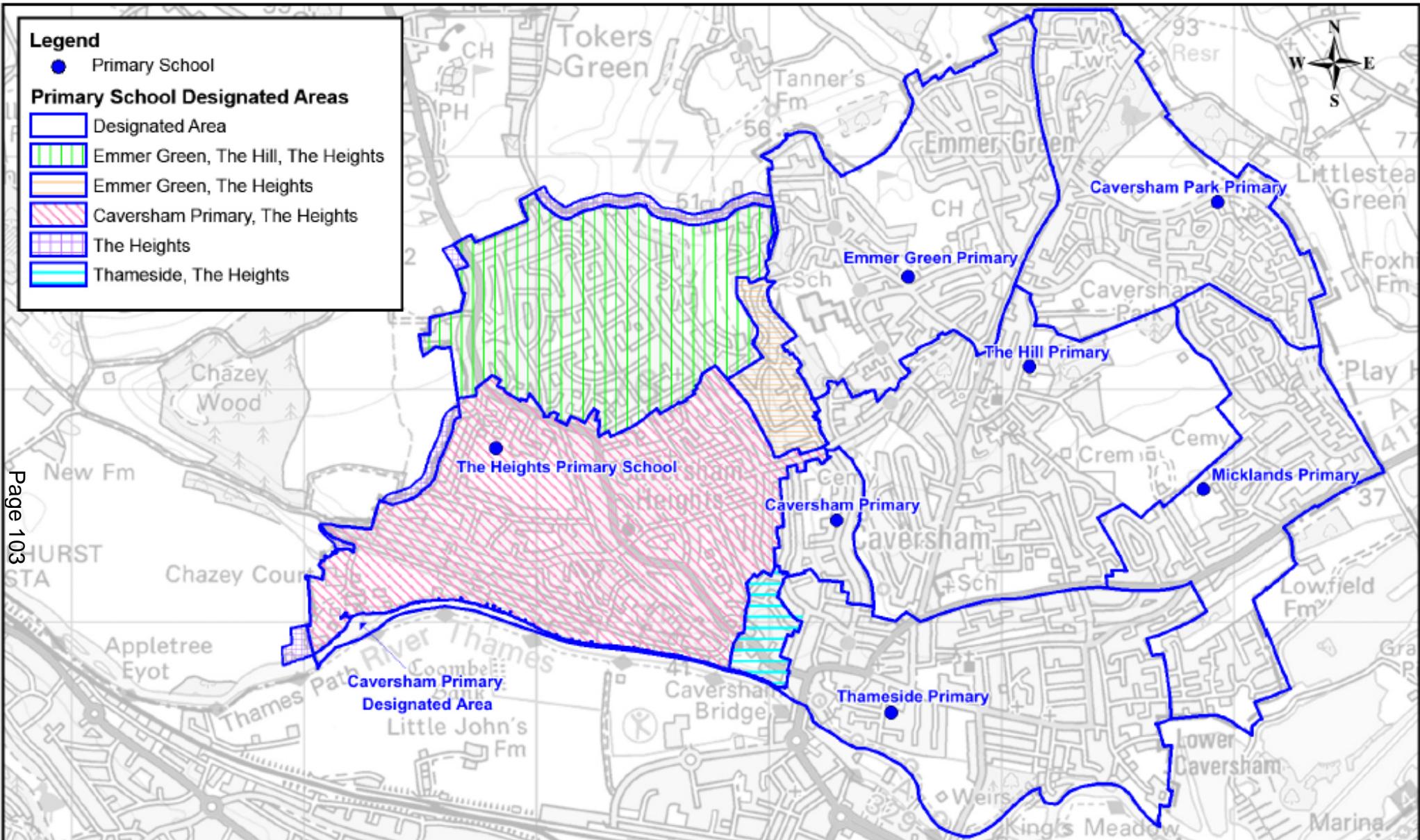
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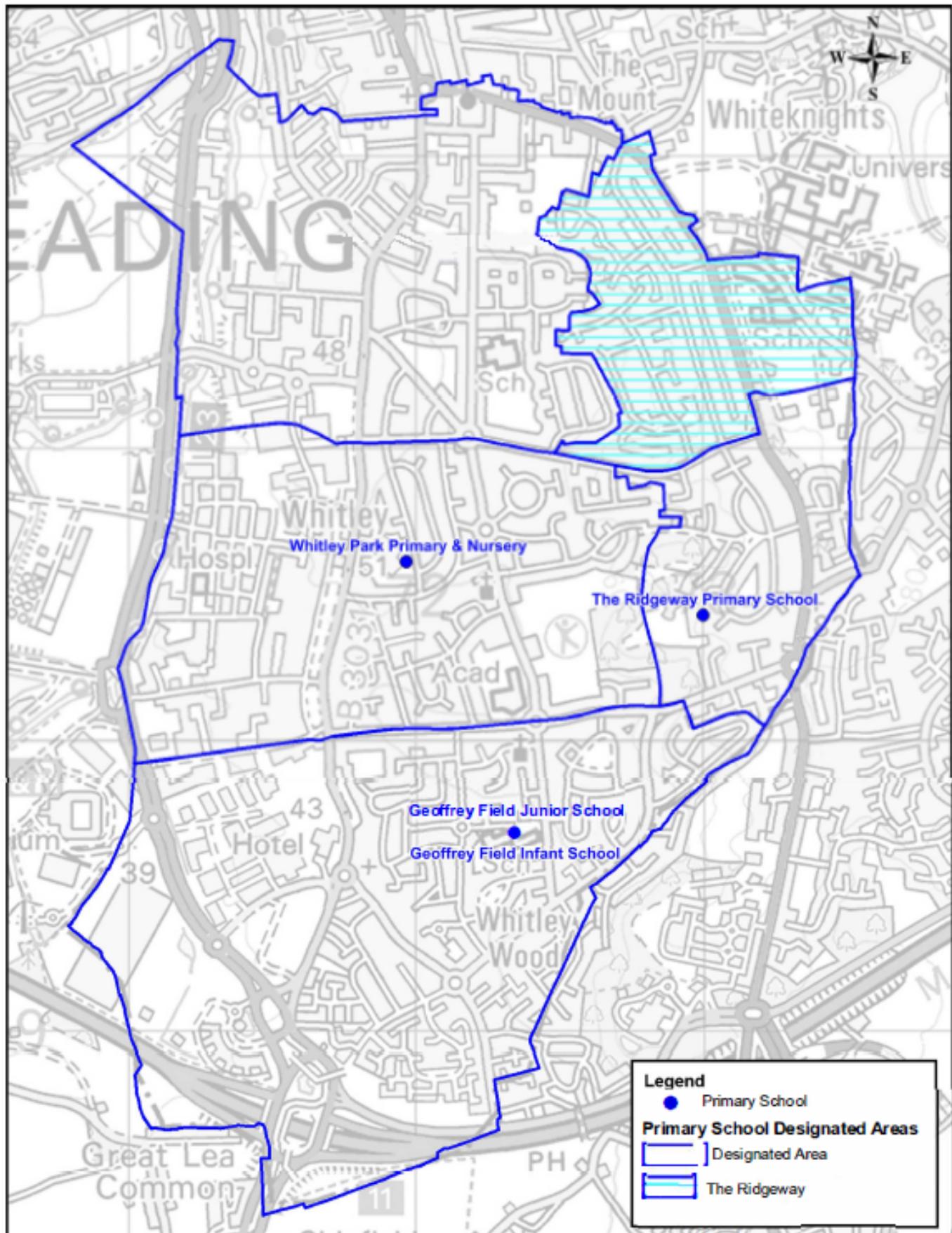
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Reading
Borough Council

Working better with you





Title: Primary Schools Designated Areas
South Reading

Drug No.: GIS00013

Produced by GIS & Mapping Services

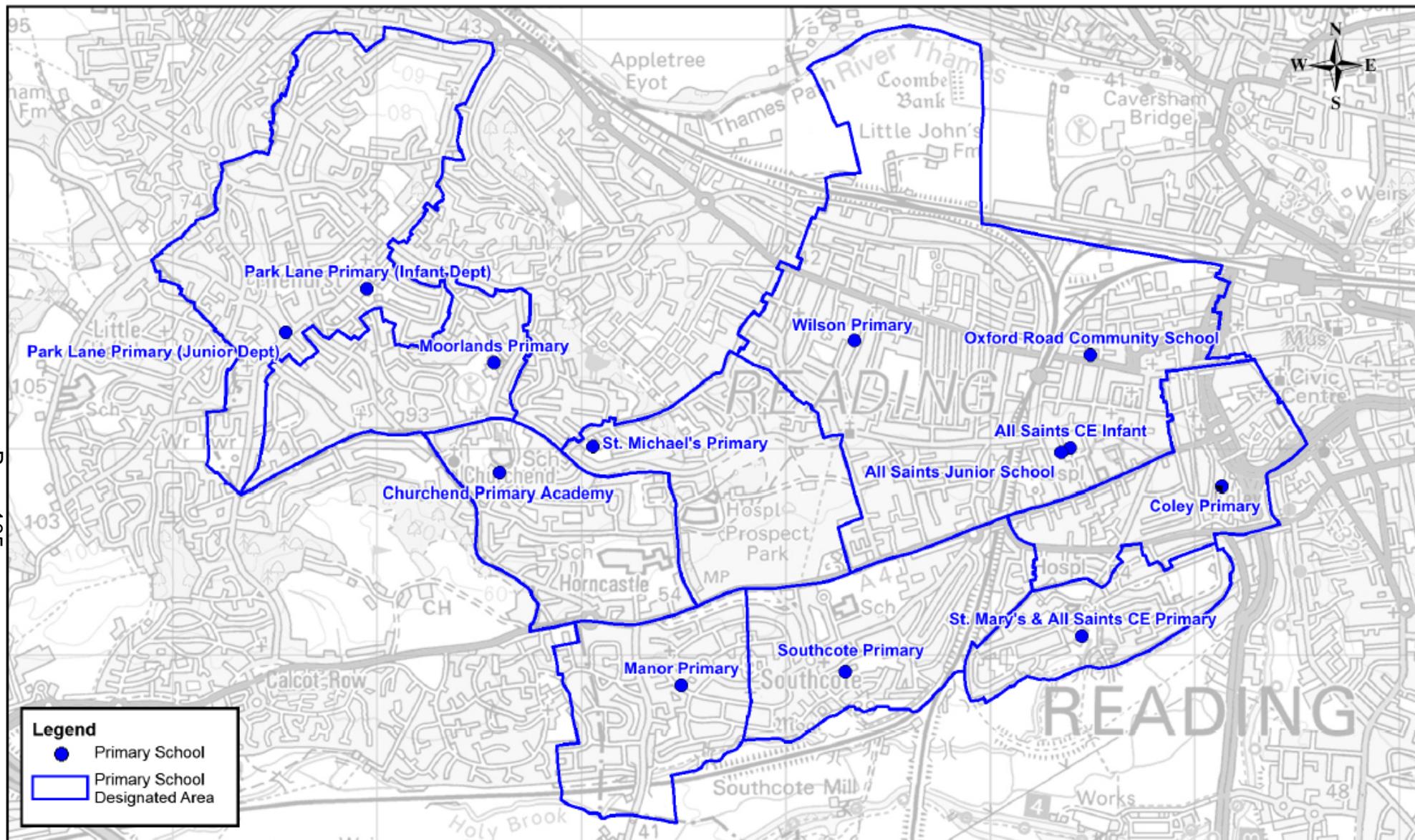
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Ref: G4M/NDIC/D/Edu & Commu/School Admissions/updated primary/designated

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Working better with you



Title: Primary Schools Designated Areas

West Reading

Drg.No.: GIS00014

Date: 09/08/2018 Scale at A4: 1:25000

Produced by GIS & Mapping Services

Ref:7223 - G:\Mapinfo\Datasets\Client datasets\Education & Community\School Admissions\updated primary schools\designated areas maps



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**Coordinated Admissions scheme for Reading Borough Council
Secondary Schools for the 2027/2028 academic year.**

For September 2027 entry

Determined on

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Introduction

~~Reading Borough Council delivers its school admissions service through Brighter Futures for Children (BFFC). BFFC is an independent, not for profit company, wholly owned by Reading Borough Council, set up in December 2018 to deliver children's services, early help, education and SEND services in Reading.~~

The Reading coordinated scheme was ~~last~~ consulted between **17 October and the 28 November 2025**. ~~There have been no significant changes since that consultation took place, therefore no requirement for a public consultation.~~

This Scheme is made under section 84 of the Standards and Framework Act 1998 and in accordance with the School Admissions (Admissions Arrangements and Coordination of admissions arrangements (England) Regulations 2014.

The purpose of this coordinated scheme for secondary school admissions is to ensure that every parent/carer of a child **resident in Reading Borough**, who has applied, receives **one offer** of a school place at the conclusion of the normal admissions round. At its heart is clear communication between Reading school admissions, other local authorities, community, and all state schools in Reading.

Parents/carers who live in the Borough of Reading **must** apply to Reading school admissions if they require a place for their child in any state school as part of a routine admissions round, including schools in other local authorities, academies and free schools. Applications cannot be submitted to a school or to the local authority in which the school is situated. Parents/carers living within any other local authority areas must apply through their own local authority admissions service.

Coordination with Reading school admissions does not affect the right of individual admission authorities to set and operate their own admission arrangements. Admission authorities for Reading schools will need to comply with the timetable set out below. As all schools in Reading are foundation, voluntary aided or academies, the governing body of each school will consult (if necessary) and determine their own admission arrangements for **September 2027**.

These arrangements deal mainly with a child's admission to secondary school during the school year from **September 2027 to August 2028**. The children concerned are typically those born between **1 September 2015 and 31 August 2016**. The place offered is a full-time place from **September 2026**.

National Offer Day for Secondary Admissions is **1 March 2027**

Coordinated Admissions scheme for Reading Borough Council Secondary Schools for the **2027/2028** academic year.

Applications

Reading Borough Council will put in place procedures to, where possible, ensure all parents/carers living in the Borough of Reading (with a child eligible to start secondary school in September 2027) will be aware of the application process. Eligible children living in Reading will receive information about the process in early September 2026. Children who attend Reading schools, but who are not resident in Reading, will be advised to apply to their home local authority.

Parents/carers are encouraged to apply online via the Reading Parent Portal. The site will be open from **1 September 2026 until 31 October 2026**.

Parents/carers will be invited to list four preferred schools and rank them in priority order. Parents/carers may also give reasons for their preferences. Parents/carers may list any state schools, including those outside the local authority; this includes academies, voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools.

The Reading common application form (and the online terms and conditions) will include a statement requiring parents to confirm they have read the *Guide for Parents and Carers* and accept the policies and procedures in that document.

Parents/carers should return their completed forms directly to the school admissions team at **Reading Borough Council**.

Parents/carers will complete the common application form online by the agreed deadline. The school admissions team will validate the application address. Validation, where possible, will be by reference to Council Tax data held by the **Council**. Where this is not possible, proof of residence will be required in the form of ownership documents or tenancy agreement.

Where, as part of its admission arrangements, a school requires additional information, parents/carers may also choose to complete a supplementary form to support their application. This should be submitted separately to the school. The *Guide for Parents and Carers* will identify those Reading schools for which a supplementary form may be necessary. These forms will be available from **the relevant Reading Borough Council website**. Supplementary forms are not applications and parent/carers must apply to Reading school admissions either on the common application form or online.

National Closing Date is **31 October 2026**.

Late Applications

Applications received after the closing date will be treated as 'late' applications. However, if the late submission of the application is caused by extenuating circumstances (e.g. sudden illness or death of a close family member or the family having very recently moved to the area) the application may be accepted as "on time". The reason for late submission must be supported with documentary evidence received before **1 January 2027**.

Where no evidence is provided, it will be assumed that the application could reasonably have been submitted by the closing date. In such cases, the application will be treated as late and considered after all on time applications have been allocated.

All applications received from the **1 January 2027** are considered late and will be passed to the appropriate admission authority in Reading (or to the appropriate local authority) approximately two weeks after national offer day.

In these cases, parents/carers will be informed about the outcome of their application as per the timetable below, after National Offer Day. Unsuccessful applications for oversubscribed schools will be added to the waiting lists of those schools and ranked according to their oversubscription criteria.

Late applications will be processed approximately two weeks after national offer day. The first round of post-National Offer Day allocations will be **April 2026 (This is Subject to change)**. After this date, late application will be processed regularly. In each case, the cut-off date for consideration in each round of allocations will be 1 week prior to the allocation date.

Changes of preference

Where the parent/carer wishes to change their preferences, they must submit a new application form (paper or online). If this is received by the school admissions team before **31 October 2026** it will be accepted as on time and will replace any previous application. Any preferences to be retained from a previous application must be listed on any subsequent application.

Any change of preference after the 15 January must be done so by emailing the Reading School Admissions Team.

Changes of preference received after **31 October 2026** will be treated as late applications in the way described above. However, applications for late change of preference where there are extenuating circumstances (e.g. sudden illness or death of a close family member or the family having very recently moved to the area) may be treated as on time, provided written evidence is supplied to support the late submission. This should be received by the school admissions team before **1 January 2027**. If no evidence is provided, the application will be

treated as late. Any application for change of preference(s) received after **1 January 2027** will replace any previous application and be marked as late.

Parents are advised to think very carefully about submitting an application after this date, particularly if **they** have already submitted an on-time application.

Approximately two weeks after national offer day, late changes of preferences will be passed to the appropriate admission authority in Reading or to the appropriate local authority to be considered.

Change of Address

As required by the School Admissions Code 2021, changes of address made after **31 October 2026 and before 1 January 2026**, may be considered as on time. If an applicant changes address after the **1 January 2027**, they will need to submit a new application based on the new address. The new application will be marked as 'late' and their previous application may be withdrawn. Documentary evidence of the change of address will be required.

Processing Applications

Exchange of information

As per the timetable below, the Reading school admissions team will forward applications to other local authorities and admission authorities in Reading. At the same time, other local authorities will forward applications to Reading for their residents to be considered for Reading schools.

Depending on the arrangements agreed with the governing body of each school, the school admissions team will provide the school with relevant information to enable them to rank applicants using their oversubscription criteria, as per the timetable. Reading school admissions will not pass on the details of the parent/carer preference ranking to the school, and no school will be told about other schools a parent has listed.

As per the timetable, each admission authority in Reading will rank applications according to their published oversubscription criteria and return ranked lists to the school admissions team.

Resolving multiple offers

As per the timetable, Reading school admissions will inform other local authorities of places offered in Reading schools to their residents. During the exchange of information, Reading school admissions will consider all cases where a child can be offered more than one of their preferences. In such cases, a place offered will be at the school a parent/carer listed highest in preference.

If a place cannot be offered at one of the preferred schools listed by the parent/carer, a place will normally be offered at the nearest school in the brough of Reading with a place available. If the offered school is one where Reading Borough Council is not the admission authority, this will be in consultation with the governing body of the school in question. If the nearest school with places is a faith school, parents/carers will be offered this as an option. Should the parent/carer be unhappy with a faith school being offered, they will be informed of other schools with available spaces (which may be further from their home).

Where no places are available at any Reading schools, parents/carers will be informed, and alternative schools (outside Reading Borough) may be offered. Such an offer will depend on availability and the agreement of the appropriate admission authority. This will not preclude parents/carers from requesting an alternative school, nor from lodging an appeal for their preferred school with the admission authority.

Informing schools

As per the timetable, the school admissions team will send each Reading Secondary school a list of pupils to be offered a place at their school. This will be confidential to the school and must not be passed on to parents/carers.

Informing Parents

On **National Offer Day**, parents/carers who submitted an 'on time' online application will receive an email with a formal offer and may view their offer online.

Parents/carers who submitted a paper application **and provided an email address will also receive an email with a formal offer. Any paper applications without an email address will receive details of their offer by letter (posted 2nd Class).**

The letter will:

- Inform parents/carers of their child's offered school.
- Inform parents/carers how to accept the offer and the deadline for accepting.
- Provide information on school transport.

If the offered school is not their first preference, parents/carers will also be supplied with the following information:

- Where they can find information showing how places were allocated at oversubscribed schools in Reading.
- How to submit an appeal.
- If the place offered is not their highest preference school(s), the child's name will be added to the waiting list(s) of any school(s) they listed higher in preference.

Parents/carers are required to advise Reading school admissions if they do not wish their child's name to remain on a waiting list.

Waiting Lists

Two weeks after National Offer Day, 'waiting lists' will be administered for schools with more applicants than places available. A child's position on a waiting list is determined by the oversubscription criteria of the school. When a place becomes available, it will be offered to the child who is top of the waiting list. A child's position on a waiting list may go up or down for several reasons (e.g. pupil withdrawals or new and revised applications). When a place is allocated from the waiting list, the child's current allocation (for a lower preference school) will be removed and allocated to another student, if appropriate. It is the responsibility of the parent to inform the school admissions team if they no longer wish for their child to remain on the waiting list of a school. It will be assumed that a child is to remain on the waiting list of all schools listed higher in preference to one offered (unless the parent/carer indicates otherwise).

Waiting lists for all schools in Reading Borough will be kept until the end of **31 December 2027**. After this date, the policy of the individual school(s) will be followed. When the coordinated admissions round ends, on **31 August 2027**, waiting lists will continue to be managed as part of the In-Year admissions process.

Withdrawing a place

If the offered place is not accepted within four weeks of national offer day, Reading school admissions will send a reminder and allow a further seven days for a reply. If there is still no response, the offer may be withdrawn. If it arises that a school offer was based on fraudulent, or intentionally misleading, information (which denied the place to another child), the place will be withdrawn.

Requests for admission outside the normal age group

If your child is currently educated outside their normal age group, you will need to ask the admission authority of your preferred Secondary schools to agree for this to continue.

You should do this before the normal admissions round closes for your child's normal age group. This will be on 31 October of the year your child starts year 5, rather than year 6. This is so you know the outcome of the decision in time to submit an application for your child's normal age group, should your request be turned down.

In deciding what is best for your child, the admission authority will take into account that your child is currently being educated outside of their normal age group.

Transgender Students

Where a transgender pupil wishes to apply for a single-sex school, they must do so in the normal way (outlined in this policy) by completing the Common Application Form. Reading school admissions will coordinate these admissions; however, it is for the admissions authority of the school(s) listed on the application to decide on the case. Where a place is refused, parents will be notified of their right to appeal.

Disputes between Parents

Anyone with parental responsibility may apply for their child's school place and list up to four preferred schools. However, the child's address on the application should be recorded as the place they spend most of the week as set out in our definition of 'Home Address'

When completing application forms, parents/carers must tick to confirm they have parental responsibility for the child and that their application is made with the agreement of all parties having parental responsibility.

Where parents disagree over which school preferences should be named, we recommend starting the following process as early as possible as national closing dates are fixed and cannot be extended under any circumstances:

- We urge parents to work together in the best interests of their child; it is advised that the applicant should inform all other parties who have parental responsibility before submitting the application.
- All parties should agree with the school preferences to be listed. Any disagreements should be resolved before an application is submitted.
- If parents are unable to reach an amicable agreement, they should seek legal advice or recourse through the Family Court.

The local authority will only process one application per child and will only make one offer of a school place.

Where more than one application is received, the local authority (or local authorities if parents submit applications to more than one) will contact both applicants to advise that more than one application has been received and request they complete one application with one set of preferences for their child.

All evidence must be received by published closing dates, at which point a decision will be made as to which application is processed. The local authorities concerned may contact early years or education settings noted in the application, or other professionals working with the child where applicable, to assist in their decision making. Any evidence provided after the closing date which affects the content or processing of the application, may render the application late, and delay an offer of a school place.

We will not mediate between parents where there is a dispute. Only one application will be accepted, and the final decision will rest with the local authority after all submitted evidence has been considered.

In-Year Admissions

The In- Year admissions arrangements for the school year, **September 2027- July 2028** will use the determined policies of **2027/2028**.

Parents/carers seeking admission for their child in Year 7- Year 11 of a secondary school in the Reading Borough should in most cases apply to Reading school admissions. Most secondary schools in the borough have opted to be part of the coordinated admission arrangements. A list of the schools to which a direct application is necessary may be obtained from the **relevant Reading Borough Council website**. Where a school listed is in another local authority, the parent/carer will be advised to apply directly to that local authority and the application for that school will follow the relevant local authority's scheme

Timetable for the Secondary School Admissions Round **2027-2028**

Action	Date
<i>Guide for Parents and Carers to be placed website</i>	By 2 September 2026
Information sent to Primary Schools to share with parent	By 8 September 2026
Online Reading Parent Portal for admissions site open. (opening date can be subject to change)	1 September 2026 – 31 October 2026
National Closing date for receipt of applications.	31 October 2026
Late/change of preference applications accepted in extenuating circumstances; written support must be submitted at time of application.	By 31 December 2026
Application details sent to secondary schools in Reading and other local authorities. Own Admissions Authority schools to provide Reading school admissions team with a list of children ranked according to the school's oversubscription criteria.	During December 2026- January 2027
Coordination to finish between other local authorities of offers that can be made to their residents in Reading schools.	By 13 February 2027
National Offer Day - Offer notifications sent to Reading Residents	1 March 2027
Deadline for parents to accept.	15 March 2027
Late applications for over-subscribed schools added to the waiting lists/change of preferences processed.	From 18 March 2027
Coordination with other LA's ends.	31 August 2027
Waiting lists held for Reading schools.	Until at least 31 December 2027

Coordinated Admissions scheme for Reading Borough Council Secondary Schools for the **2027/2028** academic year.



Relevant Area

~~Reading Borough Council delivers its school admissions service through Brighter Futures for Children (BFFC). BFFC is an independent, not-for-profit company, wholly owned by Reading Borough Council, set up in December 2018 to deliver children's services, early help, education and SEND services in Reading.~~

The School Standards & Framework Act 1998 requires Local Authorities to establish Relevant Area(s) for admission policy consultations. The Relevant Area is the area in which admission authorities must consult with schools regarding their proposed admission arrangements before finalising them.

Once the relevant area has been determined, any school or academy proposing to change arrangements will need to consult with all other interested parties within this area in line with the Schools Admission Code.

Reading's last consultation ran from 17 October until 9 December 2018 and was determined on the 14 February 2019 to ensure that schools and academies use the defined relevant area to inform their statutory consultation process on admission arrangements.

Reading has reviewed the current relevant area and as there is no change, this will be retained for school year **2027/28**. The relevant area was determined as follows:

1. Admissions Authorities must consult on admission arrangements for primary/infant and junior schools with

- Headteachers and Governing Bodies of all schools in Reading Borough
- Neighbouring Local Authorities – Oxfordshire County Council, West Berkshire Council and Wokingham Borough Council
- Diocesan Authorities - Oxford Church of England Diocese, Portsmouth and Birmingham Catholic Diocese
- All Academies, Voluntary Aided or Foundation Secondary Schools within 8 kilometres (5 miles) of the Reading Borough border
- All Academies, Voluntary Aided or Foundation primary/junior/infant schools within 3.2 kilometres (2 miles) of the Reading Borough border

2. Having first consulted with the appropriate Diocese, **primary** Voluntary Aided schools must consult with:

- Reading Borough Council
- All primary/infant and junior and maintained nursery schools in Reading Borough
- Neighbouring Local Authorities – Oxfordshire County Council, West Berkshire Council and Wokingham Borough Council
- All Academies, Voluntary Aided or Foundation primary/junior and infants' schools outside Reading Borough within 3.2 kilometres (2 miles) of the school

3. Primary Academies and Foundation and Trust schools must consult with

- Reading Borough Council
- All primary/infant/junior and maintained nursery schools in Reading Borough
- Neighbouring Local Authorities – Oxfordshire County Council, West Berkshire Council and Wokingham Borough Council
- All Academies, Voluntary Aided or Foundation primary/junior and infants' schools outside Reading Borough within 3.2 (2 miles) kilometres of the school

4. Secondary Academies and Foundation schools must consult with:

- Reading Borough Council
- All primary/junior and secondary schools within Reading Borough
- Neighbouring Local Authorities – Oxfordshire County Council, West Berkshire Council and Wokingham Borough Council
- All Academies, Voluntary Aided or Foundation Secondary Schools within 8 kilometres (five miles) of the Reading Borough border
- All Academies, Voluntary Aided or Foundation primary/junior schools within 3.2 kilometres (2 miles) of the Reading Borough border

5. Having first consulted with the appropriate Diocese, **Secondary** Voluntary Aided schools must consult with:

- Reading Borough Council
- All primary/junior and secondary schools within Reading Borough
- Neighbouring Local Authorities – Oxfordshire County Council, West Berkshire Council and Wokingham Borough Council
- All Academies, Voluntary Aided or Foundation Secondary Schools within 8 kilometres (5 miles) of the Reading Borough border
- All Academies, Voluntary Aided or Foundation primary/junior schools within 3.2 kilometres (2 miles) of the Reading Borough border



School Admission Co-Ordinated Scheme & Policy 2027/2028 Consultation

Overview

This paragraph acts as the introduction to your consultation. This should be some concise paragraphs that explain what your consultation is about.

Briefly describe:

- *What we are consulting on -*
We have reviewed our Co-Ordinated Admissions Scheme for Primary, Infant, Junior and Secondary schools for Reading Borough Council for the 2026/2027 academic year and our Admissions Policy for Infant, Junior and Primary Schools 2026/2027. As a result we are proposing some minor amendments. You can read the full documents below and give your feedback on the proposed amendments [here](#)
- *Timings of the consultation (when it will close, when results will be published etc.)*
The consultation will take place between 17 October and 28 November 2025
- *What additional information is available (provide full proposal documents, other media links)*
Copies of the documents we are consulting on are attached

Why We Are Consulting

Explain your reasons for consulting. This helps respondents further understand the purpose of the consultation.

The School Admissions code of 2021 section 1.45 says all admission authorities must consult on their admission arrangements at least every 7 years. It has been 7 years since Reading Borough Council last consulted on its admissions arrangements and therefore we must consult this year. We welcome your feedback on the proposed changes.

Please read the full document(s) below and give your feedback on the proposed amendments by clicking [\(here/ the title of the document\)](#).

What Happens Next

A report on the response to this consultation will be made at the Council's Adult Social Care, Children's Services & Education Committee on 14th January 2026. The schemes and policy will be determined by 28 February 2026 and will be available on the website

Consultation questions

Co-Ordinated Admissions Scheme for Primary, Infant and Junior Schools

Proposed change page 5 - Clarify that any change of preference to online applications after the 15 January must be done so by emailing the Reading School Admissions Team

1) Do you agree with this change

Yes/ No

If no please provide comments

Proposed change page 7 -

Previously parents who submitted a paper application were posted the outcome of the application on National offer day via 2nd class post. This meant families were delayed getting the information of the allocated school for their child

The proposal is that Parents/carers who submitted a paper application and provided an email address will receive an email on national offer day with a formal offer. Any paper applications without an email address will receive details of their offer by letter (posted 2nd Class) as before.

2) Do you agree with this change

Yes/ No

If no please provide comments

3) Do you have any other comments on the Co-Ordinated Admissions Scheme for Primary, Infant and Junior Schools

Co-Ordinated Admissions Scheme for Secondary Schools

Proposed change page 5 - Clarify that any change of preference to online applications after the 15 January must be done so by emailing the Reading School Admissions Team

4) Do you agree with this change

Yes/ No

If no please provide comments

Proposed change page 7 -

Previously parents who submitted a paper application were posted the outcome of the application on National offer day via 2nd class post. This meant families were delayed getting the information of the allocated school for their child.

The proposal is that Parents/carers who submitted a paper application and provided an email address will receive an email on national offer day with a formal offer. Any paper applications without an email address will receive details of their offer by letter (posted 2nd Class) as before.

5) Do you agree with this change

Yes/ No

If no please provide comments

6) Do you have any other comments on the Co-Ordinated Admissions Scheme for Secondary Schools

Admissions Policy for Infant, Junior and Primary Schools 2027/2028.

Proposed change page 14 - to clarify for in-year admissions Category 6 of the Oversubscription Criteria for Community Primary and Infant Schools does not apply

7) Do you agree with this change

Yes/ No

If no please provide comments

Proposed change page 15 - It is proposed that there will be a reduction to the Pupil Admissions Numbers for the following community and voluntary controlled schools

School	Current PAN	Proposed PAN
<i>Micklands Primary School</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Moorlands Primary</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Whitley Park Primary School</i>	<i>90</i>	<i>60</i>

By reducing published admissions numbers, these proposals will allow the schools in question to organise in a more structurally viable way and enable them to achieve financial viability, which will in turn, directly support the quality of education at the school.

8) Do you agree with this change

Yes/ No

If no please provide comments

9) Do you have any other comments on the Admissions Policy for Infant, Junior and Primary Schools 2027/2028?

The Relevant Area 2027

As per the school admissions code the relevant area is the area for a school within which the admission authority for that school must consult all other prescribed schools on its admission arrangements.

It is for the local authority to determine that area and review it every two years.

The local authority is not proposing any changes to the relevant area

10) Do you have any comments on The Relevant Area 2027?

Primary designations 2027

As per the school admissions code, a school can have designations (Catchment areas). Catchment areas must be designed so that they are reasonable and clearly defined. Catchment areas do not prevent parents who live outside the catchment of a particular school from expressing a preference for the school.

As the admissions Authority for Community Primary School in Reading it is up to the local Authority to review each catchment area every 7 Years.

The local authority is not proposing any changes to the Primary designations (Catchment areas)

11) Do you have any comments on the Primary designations (Catchment areas) 2027

Extra demographic question need to be mandatory

Please indicate whether you are responding to these proposals as:-

- *Resident*
- *parent*

- *Family or friend of a parent*
- *Voluntary organisation*
- *Public Sector*
- *Employee of Reading Borough Council*
- *School*
- *Another Local Authority*
- *Other - please state*

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Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

For advice on this document please contact Clare Muir on 72119 or email Clare.Muir@reading.gov.uk.

Please contact the Project Management Office at pmo@reading.gov.uk for advice and/or support to complete this form from a project perspective.

Name of proposal/activity/policy to be assessed: School Admissions Arrangements 27-28

Directorate: Brighter Futures for Children
Service: School Admissions

Name: Victoria Hannington
Job Title: School Admissions Manager
Date of assessment: 18/9/25

Version History

Version	Reason	Author	Date	Approved By

Scope your proposal

- **What is the aim of your policy or new service/what changes are you proposing?**

School admissions are subject to detailed requirements, set out in law and particularly the School Admissions Code 2021, published by the Government and approved by Parliament. As part of those requirements, local authorities must draw up schemes for coordinating admissions to all maintained schools in their area. The purpose of coordinated schemes is to ensure that every parent/carer of a child living in Reading who has completed and submitted an on-time application receives one offer of a school place at the conclusion of the normal admissions round. The schemes set out a process and timescale to enable the offer of a single school place. They do not affect the right of individual admission authorities to set and operate their own admission arrangements, but they do include arrangements for resolving multiple offers, where a place can be offered at more than one school. Reading Borough Council is the admitting authority for community and voluntary controlled schools within the borough.

In addition, the Council is also required to determine the admission policy for community schools which includes the number of places to be made available at each school and the oversubscription criteria to be applied where there are more applicants than places available. Where the over-subscription criteria include catchment areas these must also be approved. The governing bodies of academies, free schools, voluntary aided and foundation schools are required to determine their own admission number and oversubscription criteria. Those schools also operate their own arrangements as part of the coordinated scheme - and where they are oversubscribed, continue to decide which applicants best meet their oversubscription criteria.

The School Admissions code of 2021 section 1.45 says all admission authorities must consult on their admission arrangements at least every 7 years. Reading Borough Council last consulted on the policy in 2018 and therefore we must consult this year.

- **Who will benefit from this proposal and how?**

As above by law we have to have a scheme for coordinating admissions to all maintained schools in their area and a lawful admissions policy for all our community schools. The families of Reading will benefit from this policy.

- **What outcomes does the change aim to achieve and for whom?**

It is proposed that there will be a reduction to the Pupil Admissions Numbers for 3 community and voluntary controlled schools

By reducing published admissions numbers, these proposals will allow the schools in question to organise in a more structurally viable way and enable them to achieve financial viability, which will in turn, directly support the quality of education at the school.

- **Who are the main stakeholders and what do they want?**

Individuals/Service Users - good quality service from School admissions, and a fair school admissions process for all.

Assess whether an EqIA is Relevant

How does your proposal relate to eliminating discrimination; advancing equality of opportunity; promoting good community relations?

- Do you have evidence or reason to believe that some groups may be affected differently than others (due to race, disability, sex, gender, sexuality, age, religious belief or due to belonging to the Armed Forces community or care experience)? Make reference to the known demographic profile of the service user group, your monitoring information, research, national data/reports etc.

No The School admissions code is to ensure that all school places for maintained schools and Academies (excluding maintained special schools and special academies⁶) are allocated and offered in an open and fair way

- Is there already public concern about potentially discriminatory practices/impact or could there be? Make reference to your complaints, consultation, feedback, media reports locally/nationally.

No

If the answer is Yes to any of the above, you need to do an Equality Impact Assessment.

If No you **MUST** complete this statement.

An Equality Impact Assessment is not relevant because: The School Admissions code is very clear. The purpose of the Code is to ensure that all school places for maintained schools and Academies (excluding maintained special schools and special academies⁶) are allocated and offered in an open and fair way.

Admission authorities and local authorities must also comply with the regulations and legislation set out in the Appendix to this Code.

18/09/2025

18/09/2025

X VHannington

Completing Officer
Signed by: Hannington, Victoria

X BGrady

Lead Officer
Signed by: Hannington, Victoria

Assess the Impact of the Proposal

Your assessment must include:

- **Consultation**
- **Collection and Assessment of Data**
- **Judgement about whether the impact is negative or positive**

Think about who does and doesn't use the service? Is the take up representative of the community? What do different minority groups think? (You might think your policy, project or service is accessible and addressing the needs of these groups, but asking them might give you a totally different view). Does it really meet their varied needs? Are some groups less likely to get a good service?

How do your proposals relate to other services - will your proposals have knock on effects on other services elsewhere? Are there proposals being made for other services that relate to yours and could lead to a cumulative impact?

Example: A local authority takes separate decisions to limit the eligibility criteria for community care services; increase charges for respite services; scale back its accessible housing programme; and cut concessionary travel.

Each separate decision may have a significant effect on the lives of disabled residents, and the cumulative impact of these decisions may be considerable.

This combined impact would not be apparent if decisions are considered in isolation.

Consultation

How have you consulted with or do you plan to consult with relevant groups and experts. If you haven't already completed a Consultation form do it now. The checklist helps you make sure you follow good consultation practice.

[Consultation manager form - Reading Borough Council Dash](#)

Relevant groups/experts	How were/will the views of these groups be obtained	Date when contacted
As part of the school admissions code the relevant area are the following:	Via an online consultation	The consultation will take place between 17 October and 28 November 2025
Headteachers and Governing Bodies of all schools in Reading Borough		
Neighbouring Local Authorities - Oxfordshire County Council, West Berkshire Council and Wokingham Borough Council		
Diocesan Authorities - Oxford Church of England Diocese, Portsmouth and Birmingham Catholic Diocese		
All Academies, Voluntary Aided or Foundation Secondary Schools within 8 kilometres (5 miles) of the Reading Borough border		
All Academies, Voluntary Aided or Foundation primary/junior/infant schools within 3.2 kilometres (2 miles) of the Reading Borough border		
All Academies, Voluntary Aided or Foundation Secondary Schools within 8 kilometres (five miles) of the Reading Borough border		

Collect and Assess your Data

Using information from Census, residents survey data, service monitoring data, satisfaction or complaints, feedback, consultation, research, your knowledge and the knowledge of people in your team, staff groups etc. describe how the proposal could impact on each group. Include both positive and negative impacts.

(Please delete relevant ticks)

- **Describe how this proposal could impact on racial groups**
- **Is there a negative impact? / No**

An admission authority **must not** discriminate on the grounds of disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; or sexual orientation, against a person in the arrangements and decisions it makes as to who is offered admission as a pupil.

- **Describe how this proposal could impact on Sex and Gender identity (include pregnancy and maternity, marriage, gender re-assignment)**
- **Is there a negative impact? / No**

An admission authority **must not** discriminate on the grounds of disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; or sexual orientation, against a person in the arrangements and decisions it makes as to who is offered admission as a pupil.

- **Describe how this proposal could impact on Disability**
- **Is there a negative impact? / No**

An admission authority **must not** discriminate on the grounds of disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; or sexual orientation, against a person in the arrangements and decisions it makes as to who is offered admission as a pupil.

- **Describe how this proposal could impact on Sexual orientation (cover civil partnership)**
- **Is there a negative impact? / No**

An admission authority **must not** discriminate on the grounds of disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; or sexual orientation, against a person in the arrangements and decisions it makes as to who is offered admission as a pupil.

- **Describe how this proposal could impact on age**
- **Is there a negative impact? Yes / No / Not sure**

- **Describe how this proposal could impact on Religious belief**
- **Is there a negative impact? Yes / No / Not sure**

An admission authority **must not** discriminate on the grounds of disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; or sexual orientation, against a person in the arrangements and decisions it makes as to who is offered admission as a pupil.

- **Describe how this proposal could impact on the Armed Forces community (including reservists and veterans and their families)**
- **Is there a negative impact?** No

The School admissions code allows Admissions Authorities to give priority to the Armed Forces community. Therefore this would have an positive impact.

In Reading we have a limited number of families from the Armed Forces applying for School places

- **Describe how this proposal could impact on care experienced young people and adults.**
- **Is there a negative impact?** No

School Admissions only cover statutory School age children

Make a Decision

If the impact is negative then you must consider whether you can legally justify it. If not you must set out how you will reduce or eliminate the impact. If you are not sure what the impact will be you **MUST** assume that there could be a negative impact. You may have to do further consultation or test out your proposal and monitor the impact before full implementation.

(Delete numbers below which don't apply)

- 1. No negative impact identified - Go to sign off**
- 2. Negative impact identified but there is a justifiable reason**

You must give due regard or weight but this does not necessarily mean that the equality duty overrides other clearly conflicting statutory duties that you must comply with.

- 3. Negative impact identified or uncertain**

What action will you take to eliminate or reduce the impact? Set out your actions and timescale

- How will you monitor for adverse impact in the future?**

18/09/2025

18/09/2025

X Vhannington

Completing Officer
Signed by: Hannington, Victoria

X BGrady

Lead Officer
Signed by: Hannington, Victoria