

**ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES - 14 JANUARY 2026**

Present: Councillor Asare (Chair);

Councillors McEwan (Vice-Chair), Ballsdon, Cresswell, Eden, Gittings, Griffith, Keane, Lanzoni, Magon, Naz, Mpofu-Coles, O'Connell and Woodward

Apologies: Councillors DP Singh

18. DELEGATED DECISIONS

The delegated decisions were noted.

19. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Further to Minute 14 of the previous meeting, Questions from members of the public and Councillors, Councillor Eden read out the following factual statement:

“I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and apologise on behalf of the Council for an inaccuracy in the response to a question asked at the last ACE Committee meeting in October. As Committee members will be aware the Council has since issued a supplementary response on the website, but I would like to address this here too and make sure everyone was aware for full transparency. Although there was no deliberate sharing of misinformation, officers have asked me to share their apologies to the Committee and I also add my own apology. An investigation into an associated complaint included a recommendation that officers take more time to prepare and check answers to questions asked at Committee. Officers accepted this recommendation and will apply it to answers presented at future Committees.”

20. SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2027/2028

Further to Minute 17 of the meeting held on 15 October, the Committee received a report to determine the school admission arrangements for 2027/2028 as follows:

- The admission arrangements for Community Primary Schools in Reading for the school year 2027/28
- The coordinated scheme for primary and junior schools for the school year 2027/28
- The coordinated scheme for secondary schools for the school year 2027/28
- The Relevant Area 2027
- The primary phase catchment areas for the school year 2027/28

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The following appendices were attached to the report:

Annexe A	Primary 2027 Coordinated Scheme;
Annexe B	Primary Admissions Policy for Community Schools 2027;
Annexe C	Primary Designations 2027;
Annexe D	Secondary 2027 Coordinated Scheme;
Annexe E	Relevant Area 2027;
Annexe F	Annexe G - Equality Impact Assessment.

The report set out the proposed changes to the school admission arrangements and the results of the consultation which had been carried out between 17 October and 28 November 2025.

Resolved - That the School Admissions Arrangements 2027-2028 be agreed.

21. SUICIDE PREVENTION ACTION PLAN

The Committee received a report that outlined the current policy context for suicide prevention and domestic abuse in England and in Berkshire. The following appendices were attached to the report:

Appendix 1	The WHO Violence Prevention Alliance Public Health Approach;
Appendix 2	The WHO Violence Prevention Alliance Ecological Framework;
Appendix 3	Reading Suicide Prevention Action Plan on a Page 2023 to 2024.

The report presented data about the current incidence and prevalence of suicides in Reading along with a summary of what was known about domestic abuse and suicide at a local level. The report also summarised what was known about the links between suicide risk and interpersonal violence including domestic abuse and the best available evidence for preventative action. The main themes and current challenges that faced local systems were identified through the lens of a violence prevention approach. A summary of progress on the local suicide Prevention Action Plan was provided with details of how the Health in All Policies approach and the new operating model for the Public Health Team would address this important area of work.

The report explained that from 2026 onwards the Reading suicide prevention group and the local Suicide Prevention Action Plan would be resourced through the Health in All Policies approach for the Council and the establishment of a new operating model for the Public Health Team. This would include an Advanced Public Health Practitioner post that would be dedicated to Public Mental Health and Suicide Prevention and would lead the action planning group to drive the review and implementation of the Prevention Action Plan. The role would be supported by a proportionate investment from the public health grant through the Closing the Gap 2 contracts with the local voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, Reading Samaritans and the Compass Recovery College.

The Committee discussed the report and it was acknowledged that suicide needed to be made everybody's business. Councillor Eden proposed that the progress that had been

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made to secure an extra member of staff who would focus on mental health and drive forward the Reading Suicide Prevention Action Plan be noted and that an update report be submitted to a meeting in the next Council year about the progress on areas including gambling and priority communities.

Resolved -

- (1) That the report, progress made on the Suicide Prevention Action Plan and the resources allocated to this area of work to ensure continued delivery be noted;**
- (2) That the progress that had been made to secure an extra member of staff focused on mental health and to drive forward the development and implementation of the Reading Suicide Prevention Action Plan be noted;**
- (3) That an update report be submitted to a meeting in the next Council year about the progress on areas including gambling and priority communities.**

22. ANNUAL COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS REPORT 2024/25 FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE

The Committee received a report providing an overview of complaints that had been received in 2024/25 and had been dealt with using either the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure or the Statutory Complaints Procedure for Adult Social Care, summarising the main types of complaints that had been received and providing some examples where improvements had been made as a result of learning from these complaints. A summary of Adult Social Care Complaints and Compliments 2024/25 was attached to the report at Appendix A.

The report stated that during 2024/25 the service had received 59 statutory complaints, which was an 18% increase compared to the 50 that had been received in 2023/24, and 13 corporate complaints, which was an increase of 85% compared to the seven that had been received in 2023/24. One Stage 2 request had been received for a corporate complaint in 2024/25, however, no requests for a corporate Stage 2 investigation had been received during this period. The main themes for the period 2024/25 for corporate complaints had been as follows:

- Financial Issue - 6 (46.1%);
- Quality of Service Provided - 4 (30.8%);
- Staff Conduct - 2 (15.4%);
- Communication - 1 (7.7%).

The main themes for the period 2024/25 for statutory complaints had been as follows:

- Quality of Service Provided - 23 (38.9%);
- Staff Conduct - 10 (16.94%);
- Communication - 10 (16.94%);

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- Financial - 9 (15.2%).

The summary of Adult Social Care Complaints and Compliments 2024/25 set out in Appendix A would be published on the Council's website and highlighted some examples of learning from complaints in the previous year along with key service improvements that had been made as a result of the complaints that had been received.

Resolved -

- (1) That the report be noted:
- (2) That the action taken in response to learning from complaints, as described in the summary of Adult Social Care Complaints and Compliments 2024/25, attached at Appendix A to the report, be noted.

23. DIRECTORATE OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES ANNUAL COMPLAINTS & COMPLIMENTS REPORT - 2024-25

The Committee received a report that outlined the work that Children's Services had carried out to improve customer relations, focusing on complaints and compliments and covering Subject Access Requests, for the year 2024/25. The Children's Social Care Complaints 2024/25 - Summary Report was attached to the report at Appendix A.

The report stated that during the financial year 2024/25 Children's Service had received 66 statutory complaints, which was a decrease of nine (13.6%) compared to the 75 that had been received in 2023/24. To provide context, in 2024/25 3,202 children had been open to Children's Social Care, so the number of statutory complaints represented 2.09%. This compared to 3,589 open children and 2.06% for 2023/24. Of the 66 complaints that had been received:

- 11 (16.67%) had been resolved through alternative dispute resolution (ADR) by the social care team at the start of the process, before progressing to a formal Stage 1. These 11 cases had been closed off following a telephone discussion with the complainant and a short written response either by letter or email;
- The remaining 55 (83.33%) had progressed to a formal Stage 1 investigation.

During the reporting period, 11 Stage 2 requests had been received in respect of the Stage 1 investigations that had been carried out in the reporting period:

- One of these had been resolved through ADR;
- The remaining ten had progressed to formal Stage 2 investigation;
- Three of the ten Stage 2 investigations had also been reviewed by a Stage 3 Review Panel.

Both the Customer Relations Team and Children's Services Communications and Compliance and HR/Training teams had continued to raise awareness of the complaints process with both staff and the public.

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The report explained that the Children's Social Care Complaints 2024/25 - Summary Report, attached to the report at Appendix A, provided an analysis of the data for statutory complaints, explained how complaints were managed and how learning was used to improve services; the report would be published on the Council's website. The Council had worked closely to drive improvements in the services that were offered to children and young people and to signpost to information on advocacy, early resolution and the complaints procedures. Nevertheless, it was recognised that there was always room for improvement and the service was working continuously to better the services offered to children and families.

Resolved -

- (1) That the report and intended actions to further improve service delivery and the management of representations, particularly complaints, in Children's Services in Reading be noted;**
- (2) That the continuing work to raise awareness of all conflict resolution processes, including the statutory complaints process and encouraging appropriate use by children, young people and their families, be noted.**

24. READING SAFEGUARDING ADULTS ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

The Committee received a report that sought approval for the publication of the Reading Safeguarding Adults Report 2024/25 on the West of Berkshire Safeguarding Adults Board website. The report provided an overview of safeguarding adults activity in Reading for the period April 2024 to March 2025 and highlighted key performance trends, demographic insights, achievements and priorities for the coming year. A copy of the West of Berkshire Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report 2024/25 was attached to the report and a copy of the Reading Safeguarding Adults Report 2024/25 was circulated after the meeting as it had been omitted in error.

The report set out the key messages within the Safeguarding Adults Report with a series of tables, charts and graphs under the following headings:

- Safeguarding Concerns and Enquiries;
- Referral Sources;
- Enquiries by Age and Gender;
- Types of Abuse in Concluded Enquiries;
- Outcomes of Concluded Enquiries.

A positive change for Reading had been the higher conversion rate, from Concern to s42 Enquiry, of 37%; this evidenced the targeted work that had been done to reduce the 'out of scope' referrals, clarifying criteria and raising awareness. As a result, inappropriate concern referrals had fallen significantly whilst more concerns that had been raised met the Care Act criteria or warranted intervention, meaning that staff and agencies were identifying genuine risks rather than unnecessary referrals.

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The report stated that, with regard to achievements during 2024/25, the Council had made significant strides in strengthening its safeguarding framework. A major achievement had been the successful clearance of the backlog of safeguarding enquiries, which had previously posed challenges to timely intervention. The introduction of a new duty system and the launch of a comprehensive safeguarding manual had provided staff with clear guidance and had improved operational efficiency. The implementation of the Mosaic module and an embedded feedback form had enhanced case recording and had allowed for better quality assurance. The Council had also seen a notable increase in Persons in Position of Trust (PiPOT) referrals, rising from just four in the previous year to 26, reflecting improved awareness and compliance. Training had remained a priority, with over 620 staff completing fire safety training and 101 staff receiving specialist training on mental capacity, ensuring that frontline practitioners were equipped to manage complex safeguarding scenarios effectively.

Looking ahead for 2025/26, the Council had identified key priorities to build on the progress that had already been achieved in the previous year:

- Priority 1 Continued enhancement of the Making Safeguarding Personal approach;
- Priority 2 Raising awareness of PiPOT across all agencies;
- Priority 3 Development of transitional safeguarding pathways to support young people moving into adulthood;
- Priority 4 Prevention work would remain at the forefront, with targeted initiatives addressing hoarding, self-neglect and exploitation.

These priorities reflected a proactive strategy that was aimed at reducing risk, promoting independence and improving the overall safeguarding experience for adults at risk and to support them the investment in workplace development would continue. Strengthening community engagement would also be critical to ensuring that safeguarding services remained inclusive and responsive to the needs of diverse populations.

Resolved - That the publication of the Reading Safeguarding Adults Annual Report 2024/25 be endorsed.

(The meeting closed at 7.38 pm)