CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Report subject	**Risk Management - Children's Services**
Meeting date	14 September 2026
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	This report updates councillors on the position of those corporate risks relating specifically to Children's Services.
Recommendations	**It is RECOMMENDED that:** **Members of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the update provided in this report relating to those corporate risks specific to Children's Services.**
Reason for recommendations	To provide assurance that the corporate risks relating specifically to Children's Services are being managed effectively.
Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Richard Burton, Portfolio Holder for Children & Young People
Corporate Director	Aidan Dunn, Chief Executive
Report Authors	Fiona Manton Risk & Insurance Manager Rachel Gravett Director of Commissioning, Resources and Quality
Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Update and Information

Background

1. To provide an overview of the two Corporate Risks specific to Children's Services.
2. Members will be aware that risk can be broadly defined as the possibility that an action, issue or activity (including inaction) will lead to a loss or an undesirable outcome. It follows that risk management is about the identification, assessment and prioritisation of risks followed by co-ordinated control of the probability and impact of individual risks.
3. BCP Council has in place a Risk Management Policy. This provides the framework for the consideration of risk throughout the organisation. It supports effective governance and informed decision making.
4. As part of the arrangements, the council has in place a Corporate Risk Register. This register was established at the commencement of BCP Council and is routinely reviewed and reported on every quarter.

Corporate Risk Review

5. The Corporate Risk Register is the Council's record of risks that significantly affect the achievement of corporate priorities, statutory responsibilities, financial sustainability, service delivery, reputation, or safety and wellbeing.
6. The Corporate Risk Register:
    - Identifies the Council's most significant risks.
    - Assesses the likelihood and impact of those risks.
    - Records existing controls and future mitigation actions.
    - Allocates ownership and accountability.
    - Enables monitoring of changes in risk exposure over time.
    - Supports informed decision-making
7. In order to provide the committee with insight in terms of the approach to risk management, a summary of the process followed is shown at Appendix 1 of this report
8. To assist in the understanding of prioritisation of risk, the council's risk matrix and definitions is shown at Appendix 2.

Corporate Risk Register – Children's Services

9. In Children's Services, risk management is central to safeguarding children, meeting statutory duties, maintaining service quality and ensuring that resources are targeted where they have the greatest impact. The two corporate risks owned by Children's Services should be viewed alongside the wider operating context, including demand, complexity of need, workforce capacity, placement sufficiency, financial pressures, SEND pressures and partnership effectiveness. Effective oversight of these risks supports early identification of pressure, timely escalation, and assurance that mitigations are focused on improving outcomes for children, young people and families.

10. Enclosed at Appendix 3 to this report is the July update to these two risks as reported to the Audit and Governance Committee.
11. For completeness, it should be noted that most of the Corporate Risks, whilst not owned by Children's Services, do relate to or impact on them.
12. The Corporate Risk Register is a dynamic document, so the Committee is asked to note that the update provided is captured at a point in time.

Summary of legal implications

13. There are no direct legal implications from this report.

Summary of human resources implications

14. There are no direct human resources implications from this report.

Summary of sustainability impact

15. There are no direct sustainability implications from this report.

Summary of public health implications

16. There are no direct Public Health implications from this report.

Summary of equality implications

17. There are no direct equality implications from this report.

Summary of risk assessment

18. The risk management implications are set out within the content of this report.

Background papers

Risk Management – Corporate Risk Register Update Report to the Audit and Governance Committee on 30 July 2026.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Summary of Risk Management Process
Appendix 2 - BCP Council's Risk Matrix and Definitions
Appendix 3 - Full Risk Details

Appendix 1

BCP Council - Risk Management

Identify Risks

Process to be integrated into council business as usual and considered by all business areas

RISK is the effect of uncertainty on objectives. Risk is usually expressed in terms of causes, potential events, and their consequences.

Risk management is the planned approach and should consider the following:

- Those which threaten the achievement of our objectives
- Those which go against our values
- Those relating to the legal and regulatory frameworks we work within
- Those relating to our own policy and internal control framework

Consider what could go wrong or what more could we achieve?

Evaluate Risks

Combination of the impact and likelihood of an event and its consequences (Gross or Inherent risk)

THREATS					
Likelihood	Almost Certain (4) >90%	4	8	12	16
	Likely (3) 60-90%	3	6	9	12
	Could Happen (2) 20-60%	2	4	6	8
	Unlikely /Rarely (1) 0-20%	1	2	3	4
		Low (1)	Medium (2)	High (3)	Extreme (4)
	Impacts				

Red – High Risks, immediate action

Amber – Medium priority, review current controls

Green – Low priority, limited action, continue to review

Treat Risks

Consider each risk and ask:

- Can we reduce the likelihood?
- Can we reduce the impact?

Risk Responses:

- Terminate (stop the activity or remove a risk cause)
- Transfer (pass specific loss risk ownership to another party)
- Treat (contain the risk at am acceptable level by the application of controls
- Tolerate (accept the risk)

Consider the risk score after the risk responses have been considered.

The revised combination of impact and likelihood and its consequences post current mitigations (Net or Residual risk)

Devise contingencies and action plans to reduce the mitigated risks to an acceptable level.

Review Risks

Risk Registers

- Record all identified risks, risk owners, risk evaluation, risk treatment and risk action plans
- Regular monitoring as part of business as usual

Council risk monitoring

- Risk registers reviewed in Directorates quarterly
- Challenge process via Risk Team
- Regular reporting to CMB

Council's Enterprise Risks

- Provides a framework and alignment of risk throughout the council

Council's Corporate Risks

- Regular review by CMB
- Quarterly review by Risk leads
- Quarterly monitoring by Audit and Governance Committee
- Aligned to appropriate Enterprise Risk

Appendix 2

Risk Scoring Matrix and

Impact and Likelihood Scoring Definitions

THREATS					
Likelihood	Almost Certain (4) >90%	4	8	12	16
	Likely (3) 60 – 90%	3	6	9	12
	Could Happen (2) 20 – 60%	2	4	6	8
	Unlikely/ Rarely (1) 0 – 20%	1	2	3	4
		Low (1)	Medium (2)	High (3)	Extreme (4)
	Impacts				

Please see below for an explanation of impact and likelihood scoring definitions.

Impact of Risk

Impact Scoring Guidance

Threat (Negative) Impacts Scores		
1	**Low**	a) Potential financial loss of less than £200k b) Minor injury c) Minor legal/regulatory consequence d) Minor impact outside single objective/local system e) Internal adverse publicity, minor reputational damage/ adverse publicity f) Minor service disruption g) Minimal service user complaints
2	**Medium**	a) Potential financial loss of between £200k and £999,999 b) More serious injury c) Significant legal/ regulatory consequence d) Significant impact on objective/s, processes or systems e) Significant localised reputational damage f) Significant service disruption g) Multiple service user complaints
3	**High**	a) Potential financial loss of between £1m and £1,999,999 b) Major disabling injury c) Substantial legal/ regulatory consequence d) Substantial impact on objective/s, processes or systems e) Prolonged adverse local and national media coverage f) Substantial service disruption g) A substantial number of service user complaints
4	**Extreme**	a) Potential financial loss of over £2m b) Fatality and/or multiple injuries c) Major legal/regulatory consequence d) Major impact on corporate level objective/s e) Major/severe reputational damage/ national adverse publicity f) Central government interest/ administration g) Loss of all critical services for a significant period of time

Likelihood of Risk

Likelihood Scoring Guidance

Threat (Negative) Likelihood Score		
1	**Unlikely/ Rare**	a) 0 – 20% chance of occurrence b) 1 in 20 year event c) May occur only in exceptional circumstances d) Has never or very rarely happened before
2	**Could Happen**	a) 20 – 60% chance of occurrence b) 1 in 10 year event c) Is unlikely to occur but could occur at some time/in some circumstances
3	**Likely to Happen**	a) 60 – 90% chance of occurrence b) 1 in 5 year event c) Will probably occur at some time/in most circumstances
4	**Almost Certain**	a) Over 90% chance of occurrence b) Occurs on an annual basis c) Is expected to occur in most circumstances

Appendix 3

Audit and Governance Committee – July 2026

Corporate Risk Register – Risk Table

Risk Ref	Risk Title	Net Risk Score	Target Risk Score	Risk Owner	Risk Status
CR27	**We may fail to adequately address concerns around environmental impacts - cliff management/instability**	**16**	**12**	Glynn Barton, Chief Operations Officer	**Corporate Risk**
CR23	**Potential implications of the Dedicated Schools Grant financial deficit**	**16**	**8**	Aidan Dunn, Chief Executive (Cathi Hadley, Corporate Director for Children's Services and Matt Filmer, Interim Director of Finance)	**Corporate Risk**
CR09	**We may fail to maintain a safe and balanced budget for the delivery of services, and managing the MTFP**	**12**	**12**	Matt Filmer, Interim Director of Finance	**Corporate Risk**
CR15	**We may fail to have in place suitable talent attraction, retention and succession planning, staff wellbeing and support**	**12**	**12**	Sarah Deane, Director of People and Culture	**Corporate Risk**
CR04	**We may suffer a loss or disruption to IT Systems and Networks from cyber attack**	**12**	**9**	Sarah Chamberlain, Director of IT and Programmes	**Corporate Risk**
CR20	**Potential of climate change to outstrip our capability to adapt**	**12**	**8**	Isla Reynolds, Director of Marketing, Comms and Policy	**Corporate Risk**
CR26	**Risks associated with the availability of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI)**	**9**	**6**	Sarah Chamberlain, Director of IT and Programmes	**Corporate Risk**
CR18	**We may fail to provide adequate customer interfaces**	**9**	**2**	Matti Raudsepp, Director of Customer and Property Operations	**Corporate Risk**
CR02	**We may fail to achieve appropriate outcomes and quality of service for children and young people including potential inadequate safeguarding**	**8**	**8**	Cathi Hadley, Corporate Director for Children's Services	**Corporate Risk**
CR21	**Impact of global events causing pressure on BCP Council & increase in service requirements**	**6**	**6**	Kelly Deane, Director of Housing & Public Protection	**Corporate Risk**
CR28	**We may fail to adopt a Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Local Plan**	**6**	**6**	Glynn Barton, Chief Operations Officer	**Corporate Risk**

Appendix 3

Risk Ref	Risk Title	Net Risk Score	Target Risk Score	Risk Owner	Risk Status
CR25	**We may be unable to effectively transform services to achieve efficiencies and improve service standards**	**4**	**4**	Corporate Management Board Collective	**Corporate Risk**
CR16	**Partnerships may not support delivery of the corporate strategy, objectives or priorities**	**4**	**2**	Isla Reynolds, Director of Marketing, Comms and Policy	**Corporate Risk**
CR24	**We may fail to adequately address concerns around community safety**	**2**	**2**	Rob Carroll, Director of Public Health & Communities	**Corporate Risk**
CR01	Failure to respond to the needs arising from a changing demography.	N/A	N/A	N/A	Risk removed Q4 2022
CR03	Failure to ensure adequate Information Governance – now Key Assurance – Information governance Board Risk	N/A	N/A	N/A	Risk removed Q2 2020
CR05	Failure to plan effectively for EU Transition	N/A	N/A	N/A	Risk Removed Q2 2020
CR06	Failure to adequately respond to an incident involving the activation of the emergency plan– now Key Assurance – Resilience Governance Board Risk	N/A	N/A	N/A	Risk Removed Q2 2020
CR07	Failure to provide adequate services as a result of an incident requiring a business continuity response– now Key Assurance – Resilience Governance Board	N/A	N/A	N/A	Risk Removed Q2 2020
CR08	We may fail to run a fair and open election/referendum	N/A	N/A	N/A	Risk Removed Q1 2026
CR10	Failure to deliver effective health and safety to protect staff, councillors including the public	N/A	N/A	N/A	Risk removed Q3 2020
CR11	Ability of the council to function and operate efficiently in the delivery of single services across the area of BCP	N/A	N/A	N/A	Risk removed Q1 2023

Risk Ref	Risk Title	Net Risk Score	Target Risk Score	Risk Owner	Risk Status
CR12	Failure to achieve appropriate outcomes and quality of service for young people	N/A	N/A	N/A	Risk removed Q4 2023
CR13	Failure to deliver the transformation programme	N/A	N/A	N/A	Risk removed Q4 2023
CR14	Continuity of Public Health arrangements for health protection	N/A	N/A	N/A	Risk removed Q3 2023
CR17	Risk to Reputation of Place & Council if summer arrangements are not managed	N/A	N/A	N/A	Risk Removed Q3 2022
CR19	We may fail to determine planning applications within statutory timescales, or within agreed extensions of time (EOT)	N/A	N/A	N/A	Risk Removed Q1 2025
CR22	Failure of local care market to meet increasing demand	N/A	N/A	N/A	Risk removed Q4 2023

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

July 2026

CORPORATE RISK REGISTER UPDATE Q1 – 2026/27

1.1 Mitigation actions and significant changes this quarter are detailed below.
1.2 The table below is a key to arrow directions in relation to individual risk scoring.

RISK DIRECTION OF TRAVEL STATUS	
⇧	Risk impact or likelihood has **increased** since last review.
⇩	Risk impact or likelihood has **decreased** since last review.
⇔	There is **no change** to the risk impact or likelihood

Risk CR23 – Potential implications of the Dedicated Schools Grant financial deficit

Risk Owner – Aidan Dunn, Chief Executive (Cathi Hadley, Corporate Director for Children's Services and Matt Filmer, Interim Director of Finance)

Cabinet Member (BCP Council – Democracy) **–** Councillor Mike Cox, Deputy Leader of the Council, Vice-Chair of Cabinet and Cabinet Member for Finance

Links to Corporate Objective(s):
Using our resources sustainably to support our ambitions

Risk Information

The ring-fenced Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) in 2025/26 was budgeted at £405m and is provided to fund early years providers, schools, a small range of central services and provision for pupils with high needs. The high needs funding within that total was £64.5m with expenditure projected to be approaching double. A funding gap of £57.5m was budgeted and included in the estimated accumulated deficit for March 2026.

High needs funding has been reduced by £0.5m in-year to reflect the growth in the number of placements in the year since January 2024 for provisions hosted by the Department for Education. The adjustment is unusually high for 2025/26, reflecting the significant growth over 2024/25 in the number of children and adults up to age 25 in these provisions, with the number in specialist post-16 institutions doubling.

The final 2024/25 settlement for the DSG early years block to reflect the January 2025 census, was received in August 2025. This provided an additional £1.9m compared with the estimated clawback in the year end accounts. This was mainly due to funded places for children aged under two being higher than estimated.

At quarter three, the in-year deficit was projected at £70.3 with the cumulative deficit at £183.6m. The outturn position is an improvement in this position closing with an accumulated deficit for 2025/26 of £179.8m.

The final Local Government finance settlements for 2026/27 included the details of government financial support available for the historic and still accruing DSG deficit up to March 2028. This included:

a. A new high needs stability grant, to cover 90% of the deficit as at the 31 March 2026. This grant is subject to the council securing government approval for a local SEND reform plan. This plan is to reflect the aspirations in the February 2026 Schools White Paper with submission required in June. If agreement is reached the grant will be paid during the autumn of 2026. It will be applied to the above accumulated deficit balance at 31 March 2026.

b. There is an expectation that similar support will be given for further deficits that will arise in 2026/27 and 2027/28, although it was recognised that this support would not be unlimited.

The current accounting statutory override, which requires the council to hold a negative reserve (not normally permitted) for the DSG in its statutory accounts, will continue until the 31 March 2028. The government has indicated that there should not be further deficits beyond March 2028 because from 2028/29, funding to councils for SEND will increase to fully fund expected expenditure levels. Details are to be confirmed in the 2027 Spending Review for financial year 2028/29.

Risk Causes (definite situational facts affecting our objective) (please list):

Insufficient grant funding is provided to the council by the government with insufficient recognition of growing demand and high costs of provision.

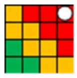
Risk Impacts (contingent effect on objective) (please list):

Financial sustainability of the council, including insufficient cash flow to meet normal service expenditure with further risk of illegality from the need to borrow to meet revenue expenditure to maintain appropriate levels of statutory services.

Risk Categories (for impacts) – please see pages 2-5 of this guidance – choose all that apply in either Service or Corporate Categories whichever fits best:

- **Economic –** inability to meet financial commitments
- **Legal -** breach of regulations that prohibit borrowing for revenue expenditure
- **Resources** – impact on other areas of the council (capital and revenue) as expenditure is limited to preserve cashflow.
- **Reputation** – lack of confidence in the ability of the council to manage its financial affairs as indicated by the issue of a S114 notice (effective bankruptcy).

Gross Risk Score – this is the rating of a risk as if there were no mitigations in place:

Assessment Level	Impact (I)	Likeli-hood (L)	Risk Score (IxL)	Risk Matrix	Movement during Quarter
Gross Score	4	4	16		

Mitigations in Place & Completed Actions

Cabinet Report: December 2024: Assessing the serious cashflow issue caused by ever-increasing demand and cost outstripping High Needs Dedicated Schools Grant government funding. Set out not just the background and context of the issue but all the activity including that of the Chief Executive, Director of Finance, Leader and Local MPs in trying to draw attention to and resolve the issue.

Council Report: February 2025: Set out the conclusion and approach to be taken in drawing the 2025/26 Budget. This included the acknowledgement of both the External Auditor and CIPFA that temporary borrowing via Treasury Management powers was a pragmatic but not sustainable outcome.

14 February 2025: CIPFA published paper: Reforming SEND finance: meeting need in a sustainable system.

Cabinet Report: May 2025: Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Update report. Reminded members of the risk and included a brief update on messaging from government.

Cabinet Report: July 2025: MTFP Update. Included letters from the Leader to the Secretary of State and Director of Finance to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) setting out the ongoing concerns about the SEND deficit.

Cabinet Report: October 2025: MTFP Update. Provided details of a conversation with representatives of MHCLG further to the letter included in the July report.

Cabinet Report: December 2025: DSG High Needs Expenditure Forecast 2025/26. Seeking Council approval for a £14.3m in-year increase in the originally approved overspend and requests the Corporate Director of Children's Services implement deficit management measures.

Cabinet Report: December 2025: MTFP Update. Provided an update based on:

a) 20 November 2025 Local Government Policy Statement. This included the statement that Government recognises local authorities are continuing to face significant pressure from the impact of DSG deficits on their accounts and that these authorities will need continued support during the transition to a reformed SEND system. This will include working with local authorities to manage their SEND system and deficits. The statement referenced that the government would set out further details on its plans to support local authorities with historic and accruing deficits in the provisional 2026/27 local government finance settlement.

b) 26 November 2025: National Autumn Budget. This sets out that the government are proposing that they will take over the responsibility for day-to-day funding of SEND from 1 April 2028 onwards, which is when the current statutory override ends. The current accumulated deficit and any further increase in the deficit between now and the 31 March 2028 will be retained by BCP Council with any support for these elements announced as part of the December 2025 provisional local government finance settlement for 2026/27.

Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2026/27: Conditions for accessing any support with historic and accruing deficits would be provided later in the settlement process with any such support linked to the submission and quality of a Local SEND Reform Plan to be completed within the two months after the release of the school's white paper early in 2026 and based on five principles:

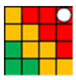
- **Early**. Children should receive the support they need as soon as possible. Intervening upstream, including earlier in children's lives when this can have most impact, will start to break the cycle of needs going unmet and getting worse.
- **Local**. Children and young people with SEND should be able to learn at a school or college close to their home, alongside their peers, rather than travelling long distances from their family and community. Special schools should continue to play a vital role supporting those with the most complex needs.
- **Fair.** Every school education setting should be resourced and able to meet common and predictable needs, including as they change over time, without parents having to fight to get support for their children. Where specialist provision is needed for children and young people in mainstream, special or alternative provision, we will ensure it is there, with clear legal requirements and safeguards for children and parents.
- **Effective.** Reforms should be grounded in evidence, ensuring all education settings know where to go to find effective practice that has excellent long-term outcomes for children and young people.
- **Shared.** Education, health and care services should work in partnership with local government, families, teachers, experts and representative bodies to deliver better experiences and outcomes for all our children and young people.

Risk Response Strategies

Please indicate all strategies which are being utilized in the management of this risk:

	Chosen strategy/ies:
Termination: It is impossible to remove or eliminate all risk from an undertaking, but it is possible to avoid a particular identified cause.	Not possible to eliminate the funding gap through reduced expenditure as there are statutory requirements. Strategy is to secure additional DSG grant.
Transfer: Transfer does not change the risk directly but involves others in its management. The risk transfer strategy aims to pass ownership and/or liability for a particular threat to another party nearly always for payment of a risk premium. This strategy rarely transfers the 'whole' risk. Risk transfer falls into two groups: financial instruments and contractual arrangements.	Not possible - the solution must be additional funding or a completely redesigned system.
Treat: By far the greatest number of threat risks will be treated in this way. The purpose of risk treatment or mitigation is to contain the risk at an acceptable level.	The service are implementing a management plan to build and address sufficiency as appropriate.
Tolerate/accept: There may be limited ability to do anything about some risks, or for a limited number of minor threats the cost of taking action may be disproportionate to the potential benefit gained. In these cases, the most appropriate response may be to tolerate or accept the risk.	No – it cannot be tolerated, and government have to deliver a solution.

Net risk Score – this is the rating of a risk with current mitigations in place

Assessment Level	Impact (I)	Likeli-hood (L)	Risk Score (IxL)	Risk Matrix	Movement during Quarter
Net Score	4	4	16		

All Significant Actions to Achieve Proposed Target Risk Score:

Please confirm the overall target score **expected completion date** and list all the significant actions required to achieve this score and **when they are each individually due to be completed**.

		Due Date/s:
Overall Target Score Expected Completion Date:		
List All Significant Actions Below:		
Action 1:	Continue to reflect on good practice examples of how any annual deficit can be kept to a minimum.	Ongoing
Action 2:	Monitor activity and statements delivered by the government	Ongoing
Action 3:	Local SEND Reform Plan	May 2026
Action 4:		

Target Risk Score – this is projecting forward to what the scoring of a risk will be when further actions or mitigations have been completed and are in place

Assessment Level	Impact (I)	Likeli-hood (L)	Risk Score (IxL)	Risk Matrix	Movement during Quarter
Target Score	4	2	8		

Quarter Update

Progress has continued this quarter in strengthening the council's strategic response to the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit, with a clear focus on both local mitigation and national engagement.

The Local SEND Reform Plan has been developed for submission in line with government expectations, setting out a comprehensive programme to improve sufficiency, reduce reliance on high-cost placements and deliver earlier, more inclusive support in mainstream settings.

Locally, management actions to control in-year expenditure and improve demand management are being implemented, alongside continued scrutiny through budget monitoring and governance arrangements.

Nationally, active engagement with government departments and sector partners has continued to seek clarity on future funding arrangements and support for historic deficits, pending the anticipated reforms to the SEND system and wider funding framework.

While these actions represent important progress, the underlying financial pressure and structural mismatch between demand and funding remain unchanged, and the risk to the council's financial sustainability continues to be significant.

Direction of Travel

Please provide a commentary on the direction of travel of the risk. It is appreciated risks may not change enough in a quarter to warrant a change to the scoring but please provide a direction of travel for the risk and provide an explanation against each assessment level.

Assessment Level	Direction of Travel during Quarter (please indicate: the same, increased, decreased)	Explanation
Gross Score		
Net Score		
Target Score		

Target Risk Score – this is projecting forward to what the scoring of a risk will be when further actions or mitigations have been completed and are in place

Assessment Level	Impact (I)	Likeli-hood (L)	Risk Score (IxL)	Risk Matrix	Movement during Quarter
Target Score	4	3	12		

Risk CR02 - We may fail to achieve appropriate outcomes and quality of service for children and young people including potential inadequate safeguarding

Risk Owner – Cathi Hadley, Corporate Director for Children's Services

Cabinet Member (BCP Council – Democracy) **–** Councillor Richard Burton, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People, Education and Skills

Links to Corporate Objective(s):

- High quality of life for all, where people can be active, healthy and independent
- Working together, everyone feels safe and secure
- Those who need support receive it when and where they need it
- Skills are continually developed, and people can access lifelong learning
- Intervening as early as possible to improve outcomes
- Working closely with partners, removing barriers and empowering others
- Providing accessible and inclusive services, showing care in our approach

Risk Information

Corporate Context

Safeguarding is the responsibility of all councillors and corporate officers, and this is reflected in the Corporate Safeguarding Strategy which was agreed by Cabinet in September 2025.

BCP Local Area Partnership had an Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) area SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) inspection in November 2025 which has recognised strengthened leadership, improved partnership working and clear evidence of progress since the previous inspection in July 2021, while also confirming that partners must continue to work jointly to secure consistently strong experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND and to update the strategic plan accordingly. The Statutory Direction has been lifted, and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Children's Services and the Local Area Partnership are now working under a Statutory Improvement Notice.

BCP Council Children's Services had an ILACS inspection (an Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services) in December 2024 and achieved a Good rating from Ofsted. This acknowledges that children's services provide:

Quality of education and care:

Children's services rated as "good" provide a good standard of education, care, and support for children.

Effective safeguarding:

Safeguarding practices are deemed to be effective, meaning children are protected from harm and their welfare is prioritized.

Positive impact on children and families:

The services have a positive impact on the lives of children, young people, and their families, with evidence of sustained improvement.

Partnerships

BCP Council must ensure that it is working with all partners in the most effective way to identify, assess and respond to safeguarding issues, and those which cut across Children's, Adults' and Community Safety. BCP Council does this through various boards: the Pan Dorset Safeguarding Partnership, BCP Children's Safeguarding Board and Community Safety Partnership, Children and Young People's Partnership Board and the SEND and AP (Alternative Provision) System Leadership Board being examples.

Communities

Key consideration for the Communities directorate in discharging the range of duties provided across a range of services, community safety and domestic abuse.

Children's Services

There is an increase in demand for services and in the complexity of need in children and young people presenting to Children's Services across Children's Social Care and Education and Skills. This is placing demand on resources and budgets. For example, there is an increase in the number of children with complex needs placed in residential care which creates additional pressure on the Children's Service's budget; providers also increase their costs and there is an increase in Education, Health and Care Assessments.

There is a shortage of Children's Services social workers nationally, which means that there is a reliance on agency staff which puts pressure on budgets and can affect the continuity and consistency of service to our children and young people. Whilst there has been significant progress in stabilising the workforce, the Pay and Reward programme has had an impact on recruitment of permanent staff, and the national Memorandum of Understanding has impacted on our ability to attract agency staff.

In addition, changes within the Health system Integrated Care Board landscape, including the move towards wider strategic commissioning arrangements and reduced running costs, create a risk of reduced local capacity and slower decision-making across areas of joint responsibility. For BCP Council, this has the potential to impact pace and grip across SEND, therapeutic support, and wider joint commissioning activity with health partners, making strong partnership governance and clear accountability increasingly important.

Risk Causes (definite situational facts affecting our objective) (please list):

- Lack of collaboration with partners
- Shortage of staff and staff capacity
- Insufficient specialist local and national placements from both in-house and external provision which also drives up the cost of placements
- Failure to deliver safe service to children and families as per the findings of the Ofsted ILAC inspection December 2024 and the Care Quality Commission/Ofsted SEND Inspection November 2025
- Poor identification and management of risk across the service and partnership.

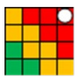
Risk Impacts (contingent effect on objective) (please list):

- Victims, death or serious injury
- Children and Young People being placed further away from networks
- Delays in finding suitable homes
- Poor performance assessment
- Poor staff morale and further retention issues
- Litigation costs and failure to meet legislative requirements
- Council-wide economic impact with more children being placed out of borough and additional budget pressure
- Adverse media coverage - damaged reputation/public image.

Risk Categories (for impacts) – please see pages 2-5 of this guidance – choose all that apply in either Service or Corporate Categories whichever fits best:

Customer, physical, legislative, resource, social, contractual, political, reputation

Gross Risk Score – this is the rating of a risk as if there were no mitigations in place:

Assessment Level	Impact (I)	Likeli-hood (L)	Risk Score (IxL)	Risk Matrix	Movement during Quarter
Gross Score	4	4	16		

Mitigations in Place & Completed Actions

Children's Directorate

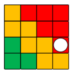
- Continued focus on the SEND improvement journey to ensure core services are safe for vulnerable children and young people.
- Since the Good Ofsted rating and removal of Children's Social Care Statutory Intervention the governance for Children's Social Care has been reviewed and new accountability structures put in place, a new development plan has been put in place to drive forward the service in place of an Improvement Plan.
- The strongest mitigation is to have the capacity and resources to meet the rising demand of need across the services and to have the assurance of the quality of practice through quality assurance frameworks and governance processes.
- Robust governance is in place to ensure that improvement continues at pace in SEND.
- Partners have launched the Children and Young People's Partnership plan which clearly identifies the shared priorities for delivering improved services for our children, young people and families.
- There is a SEND and AP System Leadership Board which holds service, council and partners accountable for the delivery of improvements identified in the improvement plan.
- Department for Education (DfE) Improvement Officers continue to oversee and support the improvement of services as identified in the Statutory Notices to Improve from the Secretary of State for SEND.
- Education Services are subject to termly Ofsted Monitoring meetings which oversee improvement and hold the service accountable for meeting statutory standards.
- A Quality Assurance Framework has been embedded into Children's Social Care practice giving the assurance that practice standards are maintained or improving. Governance processes introduced in 2022 continue to review practice and give increasing assurance that children are safeguarded. Ofsted in their ILACs Inspection 2024 confirmed that Children in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole are safeguarded.
- Scheme of Delegation reviewed and updated for Children's Services.
- Monthly budget management meetings between Finance and budget holders.
- Financial accountability is held at Senior Leadership Team and Children's Strategic Transformation Board through reporting by the Finance Manager.
- Ensure the BCP Council model of corporate support services and systems is fully conducive to the children's improvement journey.

Risk Response Strategies

Please indicate all strategies which are being utilized in the management of this risk:

	Chosen strategy/ies:
Termination: It is impossible to remove or eliminate all risk from an undertaking, but it is possible to avoid a particular identified cause.	
Transfer: Transfer does not change the risk directly but involves others in its management. The risk transfer strategy aims to pass ownership and/or liability for a particular threat to another party nearly always for payment of a risk premium. This strategy rarely transfers the 'whole' risk. Risk transfer falls into two groups: financial instruments and contractual arrangements.	
Treat: By far the greatest number of threat risks will be treated in this way. The purpose of risk treatment or mitigation is to contain the risk at an acceptable level.	✓
Tolerate/accept: There may be limited ability to do anything about some risks, or for a limited number of minor threats the cost of taking action may be disproportionate to the potential benefit gained. In these cases the most appropriate response may be to tolerate or accept the risk.	

Net risk Score – this is the rating of a risk with current mitigations in place

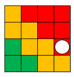
Assessment Level	Impact (I)	Likeli-hood (L)	Risk Score (IxL)	Risk Matrix	Movement during Quarter
Net Score	4	2	8		

All Significant Actions to Achieve Proposed Target Risk Score:

Please confirm the overall target score **expected completion date** and list all the significant actions required to achieve this score and **when they are each individually due to be completed**.

		Due Date/s:
Overall Target Score Expected Completion Date:		
List All Significant Actions Below:		
Action 1:	Deliver on the SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan	2026
Action 2:	Deliver on the Education Improvement plan	June 2026
Action 3:	Deliver on the new Children's Social Care Development Plan	April 2027
Action 4:	Sufficient suitable accommodation available for our care-experienced young people and placement choice of good quality locally for children in care	October 2028

Target Risk Score – this is projecting forward to what the scoring of a risk will be when further actions or mitigations have been completed and are in place

Assessment Level	Impact (I)	Likeli-hood (L)	Risk Score (IxL)	Risk Matrix	Movement during Quarter
Target Score	4	2	8		

Quarter Update

Continued progress this quarter has strengthened safeguarding practice, leadership oversight and governance across Children's Services, building on the established 'Good' Ofsted position.

Children's Services has focused on embedding consistent practice and maintaining strong performance oversight, with regular review through senior governance structures.

Key pressures remain in SEND demand and wider system capacity. Delivery of the Local SEND Reform Plan and strengthened financial and demand management arrangements are key mitigating actions.

A local area partnership inspection was conducted in November 2025 and resulted in an Ofsted CQC inspection outcome grade 2: inconsistent delivery of services. However, it was recognised by inspectors that there had been significant improvements since the inspection in June 2021. In recognition of the improvements the DfE have stood down the DfE advisor role and dissolved the SEND Improvement Board. This has been replaced by the SEND and AP System Leadership Group jointly shared between Children's Services and Health.

Pressures remain in Children's Social Care due to the complexity of care required for Children and Young people entering care and the increase in demand against the lack of sufficient local suitable placements. Recruitment and retention of experienced permanent social workers continue to be challenging, which can affect continuity for children and families and place additional strain on budgets. The statutory agency social worker rules introduced nationally are intended to reduce over-reliance on agency staffing over time, but in the short term they continue to affect local flexibility in a highly competitive labour market.

Overall, the risk remains stable with improved controls, though demand, complexity and system pressures continue to present ongoing risk to outcomes.

Direction of Travel

Please provide a commentary on the direction of travel of the risk. It is appreciated risks may not change enough in a quarter to warrant a change to the scoring but please provide a direction of travel for the risk and provide an explanation against each assessment level.

Assessment Level	Direction of Travel during Quarter (please indicate: the same, increased, decreased)	Explanation
Gross Score	↓	Improved SEND inspection outcome
Net Score		
Target Score		