

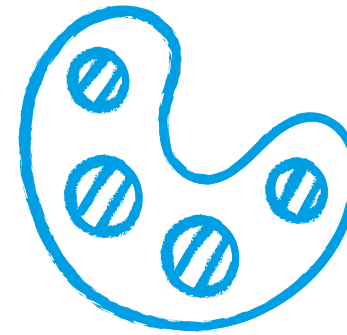
Putting the child first

Business Plan
2022-25

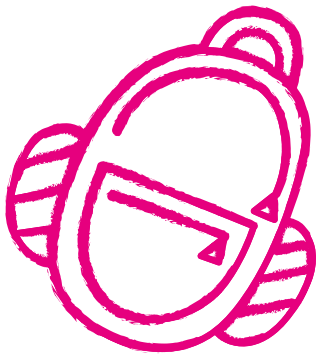
(As of July 2024)



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Welcome to our plan

A welcome message from our Young People Groups

We are proud to have helped Together for Children to reach the goal of Outstanding!

TfC listens, helps and supports young people. TfC is a family, staff want to talk to you, listen to you, respect and trust you. Everyone gets treated fairly as individuals and staff offer support and guidance. TfC is like our second family. Staff have helped us get back on the right path and they give you the right advice if you need it.

Our groups want to make change to ensure Sunderland is a better, safer place. We have been involved in the Change the Language campaign as certain words made us feel like 'things' and 'objects'. Through the Make your Mark vote, we have been involved in a homelessness campaign where we helped to distribute care packs to a food bank with a focus on low-income families. We have been getting the word out there with leaflets about our group Cozmic 3piphany and our logo that gives us an identity and we are having a stall at the PRIDE festival and marching as a group. We have also helped to run holiday and activity events where we got involved with surfing on the beach and rock pooling. We would like more children and young people to get involved and for us to leave a legacy.

We experience challenges in Sunderland, but we see positives in the way that Together for Children supports everyone in a family as well as the child or young person. Our groups are driven by us young people, we take the lead and do a lot ourselves with help from staff. We want to grow and be successful – we are proud to come from Sunderland!

A message from the Chair of the Board, Tammy Banks

We are excited to share with you our next phase of work in the Together for Children family through our business plan 2022 – 2025. Before I look forward, I want to reflect backwards on our journey and recognise the impact TfC has had on children, young people, and families over the last few years. In 2021, our children's services were rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted, they found our services to be making a real and significant difference. We have, for example increased accommodation for children and young people, opening a 3 bed children's home Nook Lodge in 2021 and Cliff Park accommodation to support young people towards independence. The Mockingbird Model was developed to strengthen support to Foster Carers and the Wear Together project launched to help young people on the edge of care to stay with their families. TfC also changed its language to be more accessible, personal, and inclusive following a campaign led by our young people.

Central to our success was the voice and influence of our children, our strengthened partnership arrangements and above all our highly skilled and talented workforce who continue to innovate, lead and perform to an incredible standard that makes us immensely proud.

As we look to the future we recognise that there are challenges ahead, both for the people of Sunderland and TfC as an organisation. However, we are committed to continuous improvement, and will keep looking for the most effective way to utilise our resources, be creative and value our people. We will always keep children, young people and families at the heart of our decision making and innovation; we are ambitious because we believe they deserve every opportunity to succeed. We are delighted to share our business plan with you and look forward to the next phase of our journey.

About Us

Together for Children was created in April 2017 to deliver Children's Services on behalf of Sunderland City Council. We provide children's social care services, early help, prevention and targeted youth services, education and SEND services and we are responsible for our own finance, workforce, property and support services.

We work closely with the Council and our partners to ensure we meet children's needs. Since 2017, we have grown our services, developed our workforce, transformed how we use our property, data and intelligence, expanded our residential capacity and achieved an Ofsted 'Outstanding' judgement for our children's social care services.

For our children, young people and their families, Sunderland is a fantastic, forward-looking city with a reputation for being welcoming and inclusive. It has many cherished cultural assets and activities and is brimming with creative potential that can inspire our young people. The Sunderland City Plan sets out how TFC, partners and communities are working together to address challenges in the City so that children, young people and their families can achieve their full potential.



TfC Board of Directors

Our Board of Directors have wide ranging knowledge, expertise and networks in children's services and commercial and financial disciplines.

The Board provides support and challenge on the direction and strategy of Together for Children and comprises:



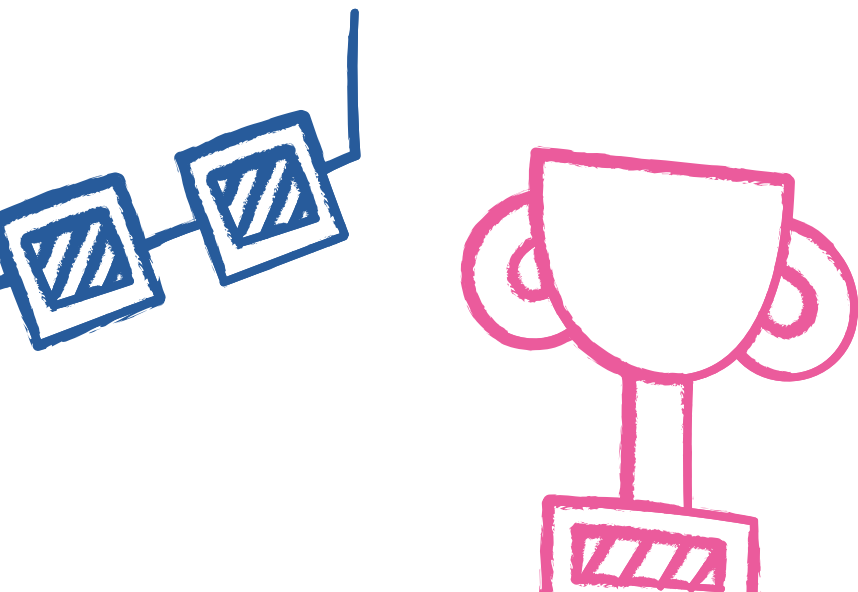
Tammy Banks
Chair of the Board



Jill Colbett
Chief Executive of Together
of Children & Director of
Children's Services



Patrick Houghton
Sunderland City
Council, Governance
Law Specialist



TfC Senior Leadership Team

Our Senior Leadership Team work together to manage the organisation, provide a strategic steer and set ambitious goals so that we deliver the best possible outcomes for children and young people.



Jill Colbert
Director of
Children's Services
and Chief Executive



Helen Monks
Director of Children's
Social Care



Karen Davison
Director of Early Help



Simon Marshall
Director of Education

Working Together

As partners we all work together to help children have the best start in life.



Our vision and values

Our vision is to improve the lives of children and their families, keep children safe from harm and ensure they have the opportunity to fulfil their potential

Throughout everything we do, we will remain true to our values to be:

- Child centred
- Transparent
- Creative
- Respectful



Young People Groups' Ambitions for the Future

Our Young People Groups have shared their ambitions to help shape our Business Plan so that 'Voice' and 'Influence' remain an area of focus for 2022-2025.



Sunderland Youth Council:

We would like more representation from children and young people in secondary schools and to have a better social media strategy so we can have more direct interactions via social media. We would like a stronger identity and to work with elected members and the TfC board to have a bigger impact.



STARS Group - SEND:

We would like staff to have fresh ideas and talk to children and their families to include us all in any plans. We would like plans to be individualised, including my views, my Mam's views and the school's views. We would like more events to be accessible for SEND children and multiple visits when transitioning from primary to secondary schools to help us feel comfortable in a new place. We would like SEND children to have options and to know there are specially trained staff who understand autism and ADHD issues.



Sunderland Change Council:

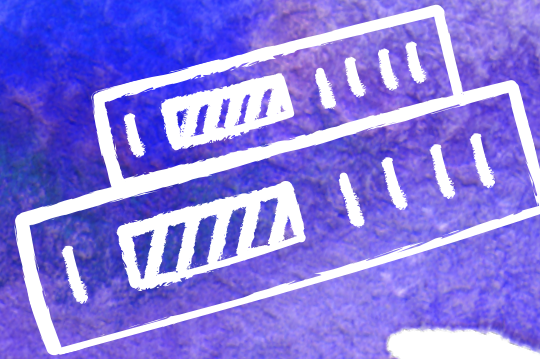
We want to continue doing what we do to ensure that our voices are heard. Our vision is to be outstanding and build upon our impact locally and even nationally. We would like more people to get involved and for us to leave a legacy.



Cozmic 3phiphany – LGBTQ+:

We want to make change ensuring Sunderland is a better, safer place that is more inclusive for LGBTQ+ young people. We want there to always be someone in schools that young people feel that they can talk to and would like more meeting spaces to be available for LGBTQ+ young people so we can meet safely, get some advice and help if we need it and to be accepting of all ages, open at different times on different days. These confidential spaces would help build a sense of trust with young people and aid new friendships to be made.

In the next three years
we will focus on



Empowering children and young people to use their voice and influence



Inspiring creative and innovative practice



Supporting our workforce and making the best use of resources



Leading and influencing future policy and direction

Our aspirations for 2022-2025

"We want to be empowered to do more for ourselves"

Empowering children and young people to use their voice and influence

- We want to hear what is at the heart of the agenda for our children, young people, and their families.
- We want young people's experiences and ideas to help influence and shape our future.
- We want children and young people to use their voices to design, deliver and review services that they receive.
- We want young people to work with us to deliver new and impactful joined up work.

Supporting our workforce and making the best use of resources

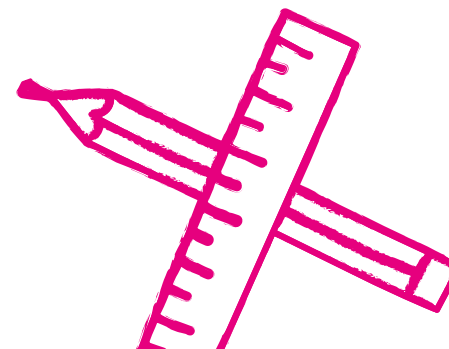
- We want to inspire our workers to be the best and reach their potential.
- We want to retain a healthy and happy workforce that can continue to develop and thrive.
- We want to make the best use of resources available to us.
- We want to balance financial stability with a drive to deliver innovation and creative solutions to our challenges.

Inspiring creative and innovate practice

- We want to innovate and transform in a way that others cannot.
- We want to push boundaries in how we use our data and intelligence.
- We want to work smarter, so our processes are efficient, cost effective and supportive to our workforce.
- We want to develop our culture to redefine and embrace our values, behaviours, and new ways of working.

Leading and influencing future policy and direction

- We want to work with partners and young people to halt the effects of climate change.
- We want every child and young person in Sunderland with special education needs and/or disabilities to meet their potential.
- We want to provide early support to families to prevent any problems occurring.
- We want every child to progress successfully to adulthood.





How will we empower children & young people to use their voice and influence?

- **We will expand opportunities** for young people to identify and influence matters that affect them through the Empowering Young People Strategy.
- **We will engage with parents and carers** so that they play an equal role in generating ideas and discussing views and concerns.
- **We will make available** the communication tools, platforms, and digital solutions to capture the ideas and experiences of children and young people.
- **We will lead TfC and partner agencies** to change their language so that it is more personal, accessible, engaging, and inclusive for children and young people.
- **We will strengthen** the role of children and young people in the service improvement commissioning cycle through our young commissioner programme. We will be led by the ideas of young people on topics that are at the heart of their agenda.

"Together for Children
is like my second family"



How will we support our workforce and make the best use of resources?

- **We will listen** and engage our workforce in TfC employee forums to share their ideas and discuss issues or concerns.
- **We will seize opportunities** for traded services and be at the forefront of any bidding and collaboration to maximise resources in Sunderland.
- **We will provide high quality learning** and development opportunities for our workforce together with strong career pathways.
- **We will deliver a financial strategy** that will link our vision and aspirations with available resources, budgets, and funding opportunities.
- **We will focus on** recruitment, retention, and develop outstanding workers through our People Strategy and leadership programme.
- **We will develop our estate** and infrastructure, particularly our accommodation and home offer for children and young people.



How will we inspire creative and innovate practice?

- **We will challenge ourselves** to think differently about the way we shape and deliver our services and infrastructure through the delivery of our transformation agenda.
- **We will integrate** signs of safety principles and learning into practice across all frontline delivery.
- **We will build successful** partnerships to identify innovative, and impactful practice.
- **We will support sector** led improvement programmes to share and spread good practice and support continuous improvement.
- **We will transform** how we use our data and intelligence through the innovative use of technologies, turning this into wisdom.
- **We will actively develop** our culture and implement a performance management framework that embraces our values and expected behaviours.



How will we lead and influence future policy and direction?

- **We will work** with the Young Person Carbon Neutral Shadow Board to deliver our agenda for achieving TfC's ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030.
- **We will work in partnership** to deliver our local skills agenda to meet current and future needs of industry in the local area.
- **We will deliver** our SEND Action Plan to achieve what families and practitioners have told us they need.
- **We will expand** post-16 education and training opportunities including support for young people with disabilities or learning difficulties.
- **We will work with families** and our digital partners to design an App for parents of children with SEND to access all the information about their child.
- **We will expand** early intervention initiatives and services into more areas where early support can prevent problems developing.

"TfC do amazing big events that get us involved"

Putting it into action

Our Business Plan will run to 2025 and will be monitored by the Tfc board.

Our Delivery Plans will set out how Tfc aspirations will be achieved and how priority activities will be reviewed and monitored.

Personal Goals and plan will create alignment between Tfc aspirations and individual performance goals.

Delivery Plans



Empowering Young People Strategy and Plan



People Strategy and Plan



Financial Strategy



Transformation Programme Project Plans



Sunderland City Plan

Measuring our success



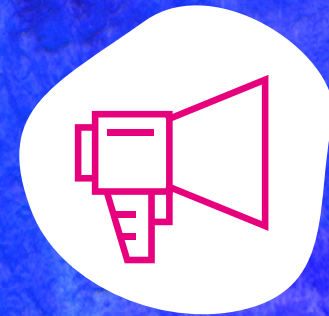
Children and Family Outcomes
(Meaningful Measures)



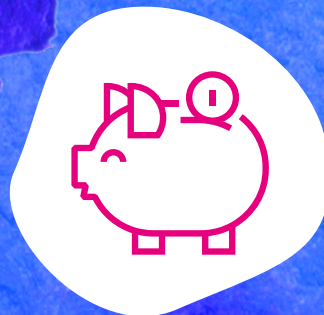
Digital, Transformation
& Innovation



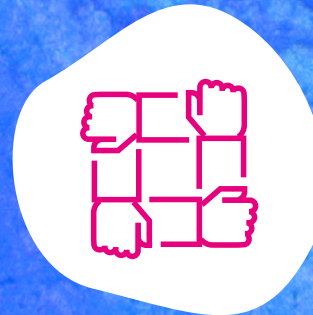
Workforce
& Learning



Voice
& Influence



Finance
& Resources



Participation
& Inclusion

Our Highlighted Achievements 2023 - Empowering children & Young People

- Our Young Commissioners produced a short film to evaluate the Breathing Space programme. The film was shown at a national event in London hosted by the DfE.
- SEND STARS co-produced the 'My Best Life' website launched to provide information including the SEND Local Offer and to book events taking place across Family Hubs.
- The STARS group provided views around their experiences of school transition processes as part of a successful bid for £1,000,000 to fund a SEND Transformation Programme across the local area.
- LGBTQ+ group Cozmic 3piphany organised the Sunderland Family Pride event 'Wear Here 4 Pride' with TfC and SCC to promote inclusion across the city.
- Sunderland Youth Council held the Make your Mark 2024 ballot, receiving 6746 votes from young people across the city.
- Young commissioners have completed Quality Assurance visits during HAF delivery and have contributed to the design, delivery, and evaluation of HAF.
- Children and young people are engaged with TfC and the Council on a city-wide Low Carbon Framework and are providing their views to support and shape this agenda.
- 1,552 children and young people have engaged in a participation activity and contributed to decision making.
- We have revised our local offer to provide young people with information about participation activities and getting involved in their community.



"We are here and engaged to do more"

Our Highlighted Achievements 2023

- Supporting workforce and making best use of resources

- Vacancy rates and Turnover are well below the regional and national average reflecting stability across the Tfc workforce. Agency usage is 0.1% of established workforce.
- All Newly Qualified Social Workers who qualified in 2023 have moved into permanent posts across the service.
- We have introduced Domestic Abuse Champions as part of introducing a Domestic Abuse Policy and our commitment to the White Ribbon Campaign.
- We launched a Fair Treatment Policy with ACAS trained Fair Treatment Ambassadors to support workers to report discrimination/harassment or unfair treatment.
- Tfc has been shortlisted for several prestigious workforce awards recognising the innovation and excellence within the Tfc workforce in 2023 and 2024.
- Tfc has achieved Gold Better Health at Work accreditation; recognising the value of health and wellbeing activity to employees and the overall organisational culture.
- We have opened two new children's homes and work is ongoing to open a further 2 and 1 short breaks home for Children with Disabilities over the next 12 months.
- 6 children's homes were inspected and 5 were rated good or outstanding. Columbo Road Children's home was rated Outstanding for the 6th consecutive year.
- Derwent Hill continues to be Nissan's Training provider for Leadership and Team Development Programmes and has now been confirmed as a Duke of Edinburgh's Award Approved Activity Provider.

"We are individuals with a voice"



Our Highlighted Achievements 2023 - Inspiring creative and innovative practice

- We have 5 Family Hubs now operating across the city, providing an integrated wrap around service for the whole family, overseen through a multi-agency governance model.
- TFC has been one of 8 areas in the country involved in the DfE funded 'Family Network Support Project' and to has supported 28 families providing funding of over £28,700.
- We have recruited a Dads' worker who has been working with Dads where a need for support has been identified.
- Fostering Sunderland now has four Mockingbird constellations that nurture relationships between children and their foster families.
- TFC has led on the development of the new regional working approach to fostering recruitment, North East Fostering Pathfinder.
- We have introduced an early intervention programme provided by the Foundation of Light for Key Stage 1 and 2 children with emerging SEMH needs.
- Derwent Hill's is providing high quality outdoor residentials for young people from Sunderland and is recognised as one of the premier centres in the UK.
- Targeted Youth Services have been involved with the Focussed Deterrent Project to reduce serious youth violence in Sunderland city centre.
- In 2023/24 the Prevention Bus engaged 5,158 children and young people both within school and the community.
- 8,572 children and young people engaged in our Holiday Activity and Food Programme

"We want children and young people nationally to have the same impact as we do in children's services"



Our Highlighted Achievements 2023

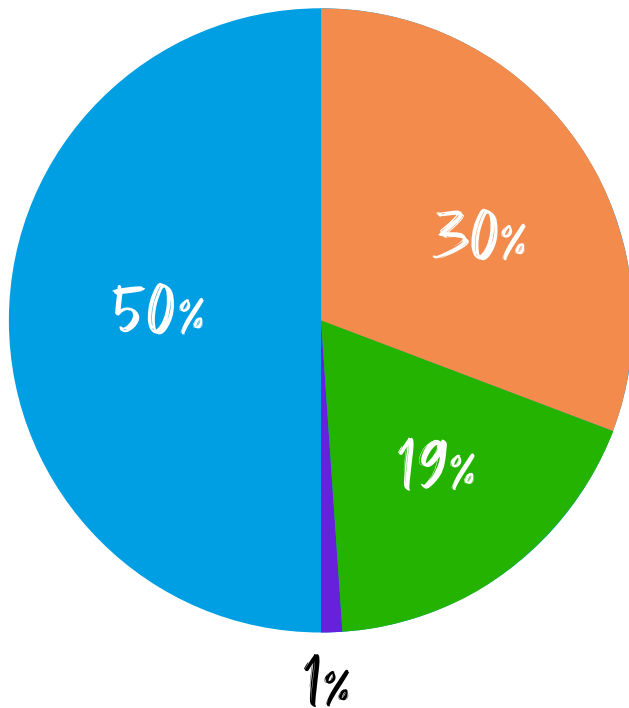
- Leading and influencing future policy and direction

- Our Delivering Better Value in SEND programme of work is identifying and implementing local and national opportunities to improve the outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- Our SEND Team has joined an advisory steering group focused on the digitalisation of EHCPs and is sharing experiences nationally.
- We are leading the development of the Sunderland Family Hub and Start to Life Model, which is a multi-agency approach, providing an integrated wrap around service for families.
- Our Early Years Team have further developed the support and intervention offered to childminders and PVI sector, improving outcomes for children in these provisions and encouraging more childminders into the sector.
- The Let's Talk Change event, planned by the Regional Children in Care Council saw young people from our Change Council sharing their views at a regional level and contributing to the local offer for young people so that all young people receive the same support no matter where they live.
- TFC and Sunderland City Council recognise 'Care Experience' as a protected characteristic and more recently in signing the Employer Care Leavers Covenant

"Working together for children"



Our financial management

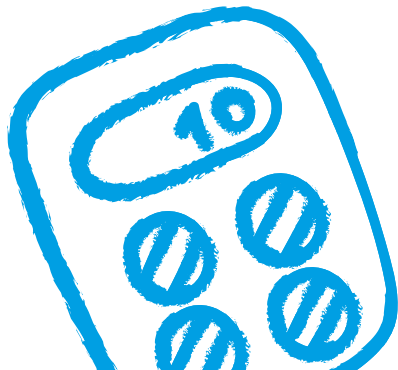


Expenditure 2022/23

- Total Funding
- Contractual Income from Sunderland City Council
- Educational Income
- Other Income

How we plan to spend each pound of our Social Care funding in 2024/25:

- 53p Cared for Children
- 20p Other Children's Social Care
- 5p Early Help Services
- 8p Education
- 2p Children's Independent Reviewing Services
- 4p Chief Executive Sub Directorate
- 1p Financial Services
- 7p Premises and Other Support Services

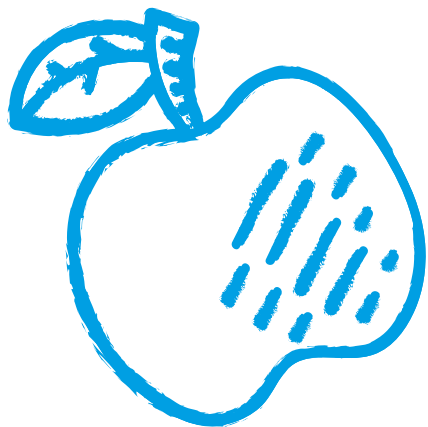


Making it happen

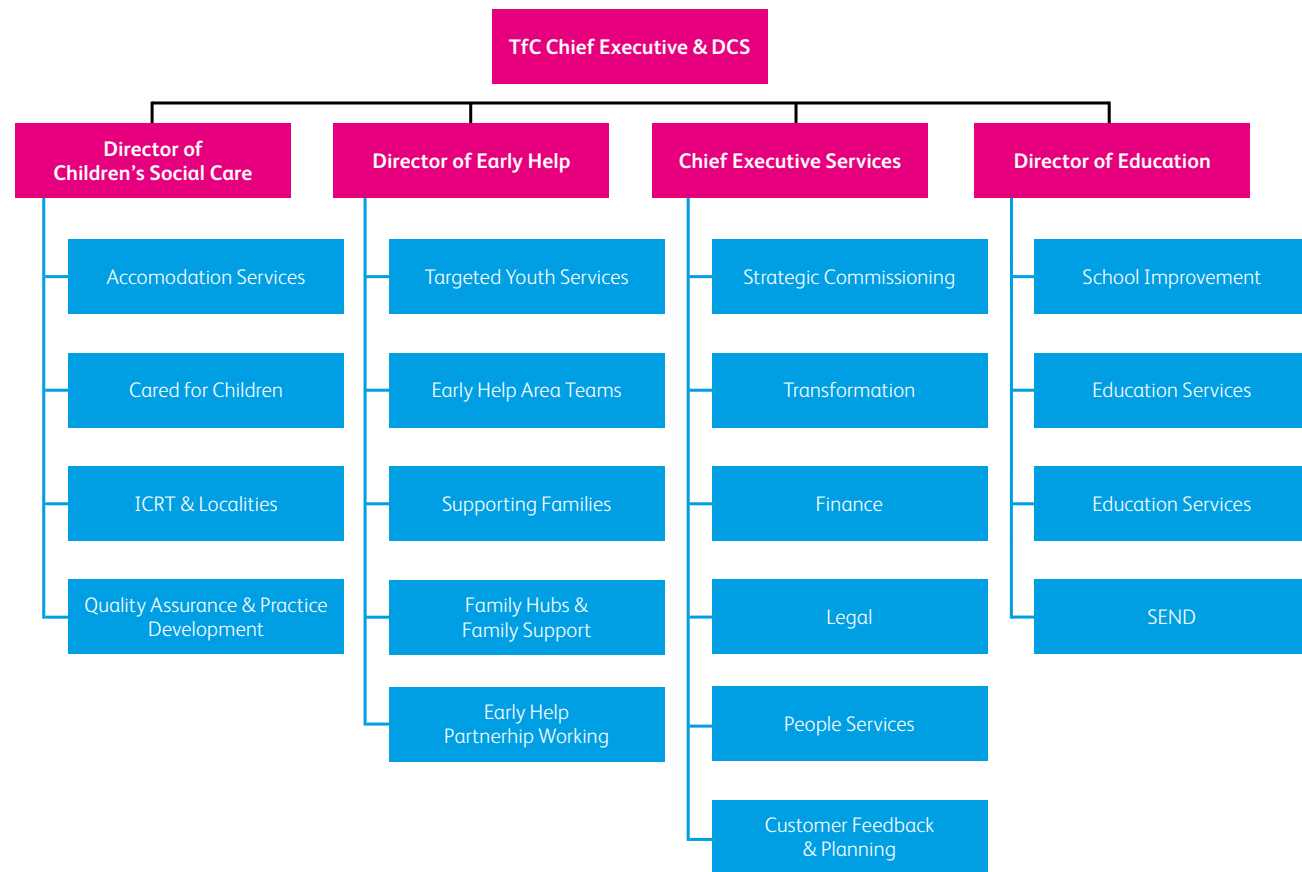
Our governance

Our TFC Board has overall responsibility for overseeing how TFC is run providing support and challenge on the direction and strategy of Together for Children.

Sunderland City Council retains the statutory duty for children in Sunderland.



Our Structure





Putting the child first

Business Plan
2022-25