



Westmorland
& Furness
Council



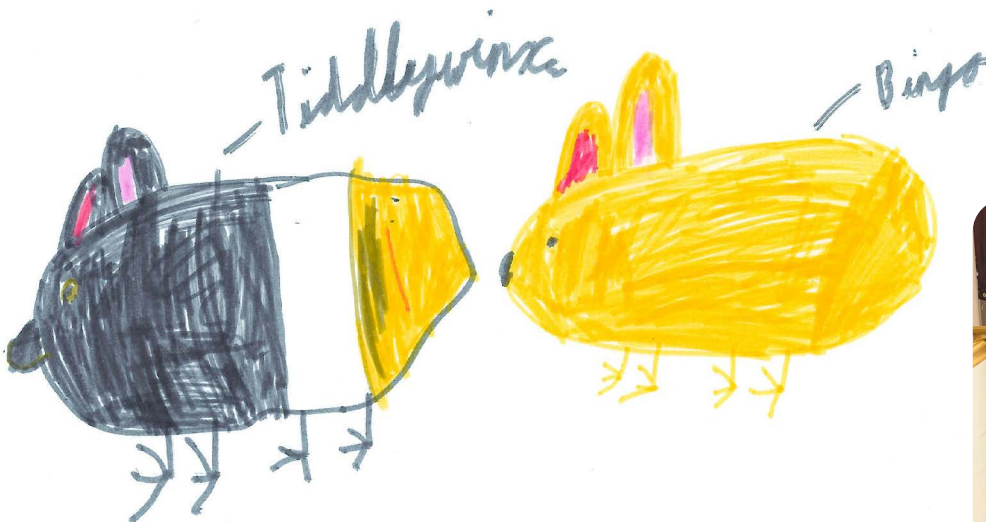
All-Age Carers Strategy

2026-2029



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Artwork throughout the document has been created by some of our young carers.



1. Introduction

The 2025–2028 All-Age Unpaid Carers Strategy outlines Westmorland and Furness Council's commitment to supporting unpaid carers of all ages.

This strategy sets out how we will meet our statutory responsibilities and respond to the lived experiences of carers in our communities.

It covers the full spectrum of unpaid carers, including:

- **Young Carers:** Children aged between 5 and 18 who provide, or intend to provide, care to another person (excluding paid or voluntary work).
- **Parent Carers:** A person aged 18 and over who provides or intends to care for a disabled child for whom the person has parental responsibility.
- **Adult Carers:** Adults aged 18 and over who support another adult with care and support needs, such as a family member or friend.

Where a child under the age of 5 is identified as providing care, they will be referred to Children's Services for a family needs assessment, in line with safeguarding responsibilities.

This strategy has been informed by statutory duties including, but not limited to the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014, and shaped through direct engagement with carers. This includes face-to-face meetings and analysis of responses to the local Carers Survey.

2. The National Picture of Carers

The 2021 Census estimates that there are 5 million unpaid carers in England and Wales. Including Scotland and Northern Ireland, this rises to 5.8 million, meaning that around 9% of the UK population provides unpaid care.

However, research by Carers UK (2022) suggests this figure may be significantly higher, estimating 10.6 million unpaid carers across the UK.

Additional key national statistics include:

- 4.7% of the population in England and Wales provide 20 hours or more of care each week.
- Between 2010 and 2020, an average of 4.3 million people became unpaid carers each year — equivalent to 12,000 new carers each day.

3. The Local Picture of Carers

According to the 2021 Census, of the 217,029 residents in Westmorland and Furness, 10.2% (20,096 people) are providing unpaid care to a relative, friend, or partner.

Carers by Age Group:

Age Group	Number of Carers
15 or under	306
16 to 24	862
25 to 34	1,318
35 to 49	3,627
50 to 64	8,178
65 and older	5,805
Total	20,096

During 2024–25, an average of 3,754 carers accessed the Council's All-Age Carers Service at any one time, peaking at 3,999. This represents around 1 in 5 known carers, indicating a gap in engagement and reach.

4. The Impact of Caring

Financial Impact

The cost of living crisis has intensified financial pressures on carers:

- 25% of carers are cutting back on essentials like food or heating.
- 63% report extreme concern about managing monthly costs.
- 44% of working-age carers providing 35+ hours of care a week are living in poverty.

(Sources: *Carers UK, 2022; Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2022*)

Health and Wellbeing

Caring can significantly impact physical and mental health:

- 60% of carers report having a long-term condition or disability (compared to 50% of non-carers).
- 29% of carers experience frequent or constant loneliness.

Employment

Caring responsibilities often impact employment and career opportunities:

- 600 people per day leave employment to take on caring roles.
- 75% of working carers worry about juggling employment and care.

(Source: *Carers UK, Juggling Work and Care*)

Under-represented Groups

Carers from marginalised backgrounds often face greater challenges:

- 58% of carers from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds reported financial concerns during the pandemic, compared to 37% of White carers.
- 48% of bisexual carers and 45% of lesbian and gay carers report feeling lonely often or always, compared to 33% of heterosexual carers.
- 27% of carers surveyed in 2022 identified as disabled themselves.

Economic Value of Unpaid Care

- Unpaid carers contribute an estimated £445 million per day to the UK economy – equivalent to £162 billion annually.
- This contribution is on par with the total budget of the NHS in England and Wales in 2020/21 (£164 billion).

(Source: *Petrillo and Bennett, 2023*)



5. Legal Context

Carers' rights and duties are enshrined in legislation including, but not limited to, the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014. These laws strengthen the support available to young carers, parent carers, and adult carers by placing clear duties on local authorities.

Young Carers

Local authorities must assess a young carer's needs for support, either proactively or on request. The assessment must consider:

- Whether the child is providing (or intends to provide) care.
- The impact of caring on their wellbeing, education, and development.
- The ability and willingness of the young carer to continue in their role.
- The needs of the wider family and whether these impact the child.

Local authorities must take a whole-family approach and ensure young carers' voices are central to assessment and decision-making. Transition planning is essential for young carers approaching adulthood, with links to Care Act and Children Act duties.

Parent Carers

Local authorities must assess a parent carer's needs if:

1. It appears they may need support, or they request an assessment; and
2. The family is eligible for services under the Children Act 1989 (Section 17).

The assessment must involve:

- The parent carer,
- The disabled child, and
- Anyone else the parent carer wishes to involve.

The authority must consider whether the parent carer is able to continue in their caring role, and how this affects their wellbeing and that of the disabled child. A written copy of the assessment must be shared with the carer and any nominated person.

Adult Carers

Under the Care Act 2014, adult carers are entitled to:

- A carer's assessment, regardless of financial status.
- Support to promote wellbeing, prevent needs, and receive information and advice.

The assessment must consider:

- Whether the carer is able and willing to continue caring.
- The impact of caring on their wellbeing and daily life.
- The outcomes they want to achieve.

Assessments in Westmorland and Furness are currently delivered on behalf of the Council by Carer Support Cumbria through three local services:

- Carer Support Carlisle and Eden.
- Carer Support Furness.
- Carer Support South Lakes.

This contract is extended to 31 December 2025, with recommissioning underway for a new service beginning 1 January 2026.

6. Voice of Carers

The voices of carers have been central to shaping this strategy. Carers have shared their experiences, priorities, and aspirations through consultation events, surveys, and ongoing engagement with local carer support organisations.

Young Carers

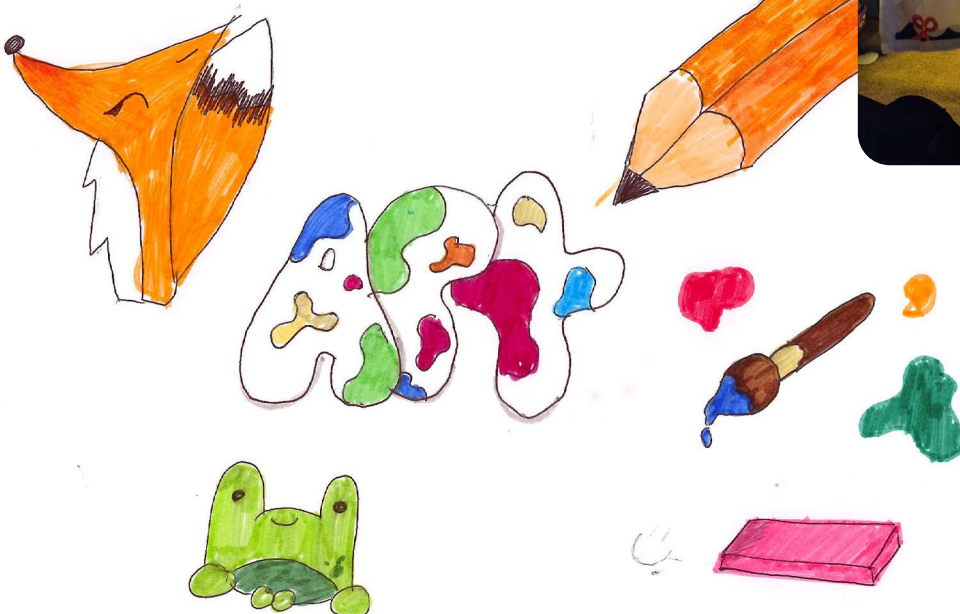
Young carers told us that they value:

- Making friends and spending time with others who understand their situation.
- A break from their caring responsibilities – “I get a break from my brother.”
- New experiences and opportunities to learn skills that enrich their lives.
- Having someone to talk to outside the family who listens and supports them.

Young carers said they would like to see:

- More one-to-one support when things are tough at home.
- More trips, activities, and better access to these.
- Healthier food at events.
- Consistency in support workers, so they can build trust over time.
- Drop-in options for advice and emotional support.
- Help with travel to activities, as many find it difficult to attend even if distances seem small.

“If I didn’t have someone I could vent to, I’d go insane.”



Parent Carers

Parent carers highlighted the importance of respite, flexibility, and accessible services. They said they would benefit from:

- Access to respite services, including short breaks and local services for the cared-for person.
- Caravan or cottage stays for respite.
- A service to book and pay someone trusted to sit with the person they care for.
- Check-in calls or home visits at agreed intervals.
- Accessible holiday accommodation with appropriate facilities.
- Evening support groups and online peer networks.
- Joint activities with the cared-for person.
- Training on mental health and condition-specific care.
- Advice on legal issues and benefits.
- Access to counselling services.

Adult Carers

Adult carers shared that:

- Many did not recognise themselves as carers until someone else pointed it out.
- They were rarely recognised by professionals as carers, even when involved in care planning.
- They wanted accessible, clear information in various formats.
- They struggled to access the community with the person they care for, which increased social isolation.
- Breaks from caring were difficult to find and access.
- They wanted a forum to share experiences and co-produce solutions to challenges.
- They wished to have a greater say in the design and delivery of services—ensuring they work for both the carer and the cared-for person.



7. Our Vision for All Carers

Carers of all ages in Westmorland and Furness are recognised, respected, and supported to live in the place they call home, with the people they love, in communities that look out for one another, doing the things that matter most to them.

Working in partnership with carers and carer support organisations, we will:

Identify carers earlier and in greater numbers across health, education, and social care settings.

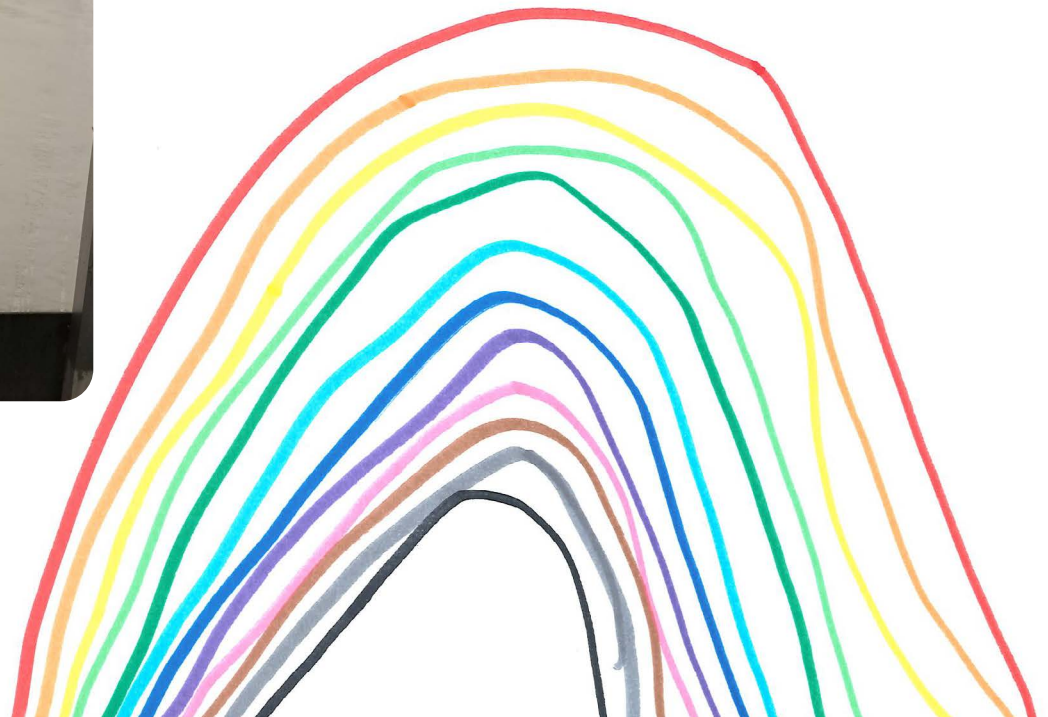
Recognise and promote the social value of unpaid carers of all age and their contribution to families, communities, and society.

Ensure carers receive timely, accurate information and advice to navigate their caring role with confidence.

Provide a broader range of opportunities for support, respite, and breaks to protect carers' wellbeing and enhance daily life.

Support carers to live well, remain safe, and maintain their own health and aspirations alongside their caring responsibilities.

Ensure carers' voices are heard, valued, and influential, with meaningful involvement in how services are designed and delivered.



8. Action Plan

This action plan sets out how we will achieve the strategic priorities of the Westmorland and Furness All-Age Carers Strategy. It is underpinned by Think Local Act Personal's (TLAP) Making It Real 'I statements', which reflect what matters most to people with lived experience. This plan supports carers to live the lives they choose, recognising that: *"People want to have a life, not a service."* — Local Government Association (2024)

Westmorland and Furness All Age Carers Strategy: Priorities 2025-2028

Priority 1: Identify carers earlier and in greater numbers across all sectors

What is the priority addressing?	How might this priority be delivered?	What are the measures of success?
<p>Many carers, especially young and hidden carers, do not self-identify or are not recognised by professionals, missing out on support. Early identification is essential for timely help and prevention.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of carers in health, education, social care, and the wider community. • Collaborate with the commissioned carer support service to provide regular training for professionals on recognising and supporting carers, including within schools, further education settings, healthcare, and community services. • Collaborate with community organisations and use local media to highlight caring roles and support available. • Expand the use of carer identification tools across health sector, school registers, and social care assessments. • Utilise the Accelerating Reform Fund (Adult Carer Identification Project) to find carers from underrepresented groups (e.g. rural, BAME, and culturally hidden carers). • Enhance the quality and consistency of data recording on carers to ensure support is targeted effectively and delivered in the areas of greatest need. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in the number of carer assessments and contacts to the carers association across all age groups. • Improved engagement from professionals in schools, GP practices, and social care referring carers. • Carers reporting feeling recognised and supported (Carers Survey). • Number of carers identified through the Accelerating Reform Fund project. • Improved outcomes on the Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF). • Percentage of carers receiving tailored support based on recorded needs, including increased take-up of services among previously under-identified groups (e.g. young carers, ethnic minority carers, rural carers).

Priority 2: Recognise and promote the social value of unpaid carers

What is the priority addressing?	How might this priority be delivered?	What are the measures of success?
<p>Carers make a vital contribution to communities, yet often feel invisible and undervalued. This priority aims to elevate the visibility and respect for carers of all ages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch a public-facing campaign celebrating the role of carers across all age groups. • Promote carer-inclusive language and practices across all Council communications and policies. • Work with Westmorland and Furness's staff carers forum to adopt carer-friendly workplace practices. • Celebrate Carers Week and Young Carers Action Day with events, media coverage, and civic engagement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased public awareness of carers and their contribution (measured via campaign engagement and feedback). • Positive feedback from carers on feeling valued (Carers Survey). • Increased representation of carers in local co-production events and consultations.

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Priority 3: Ensure carers receive timely, accurate information and advice

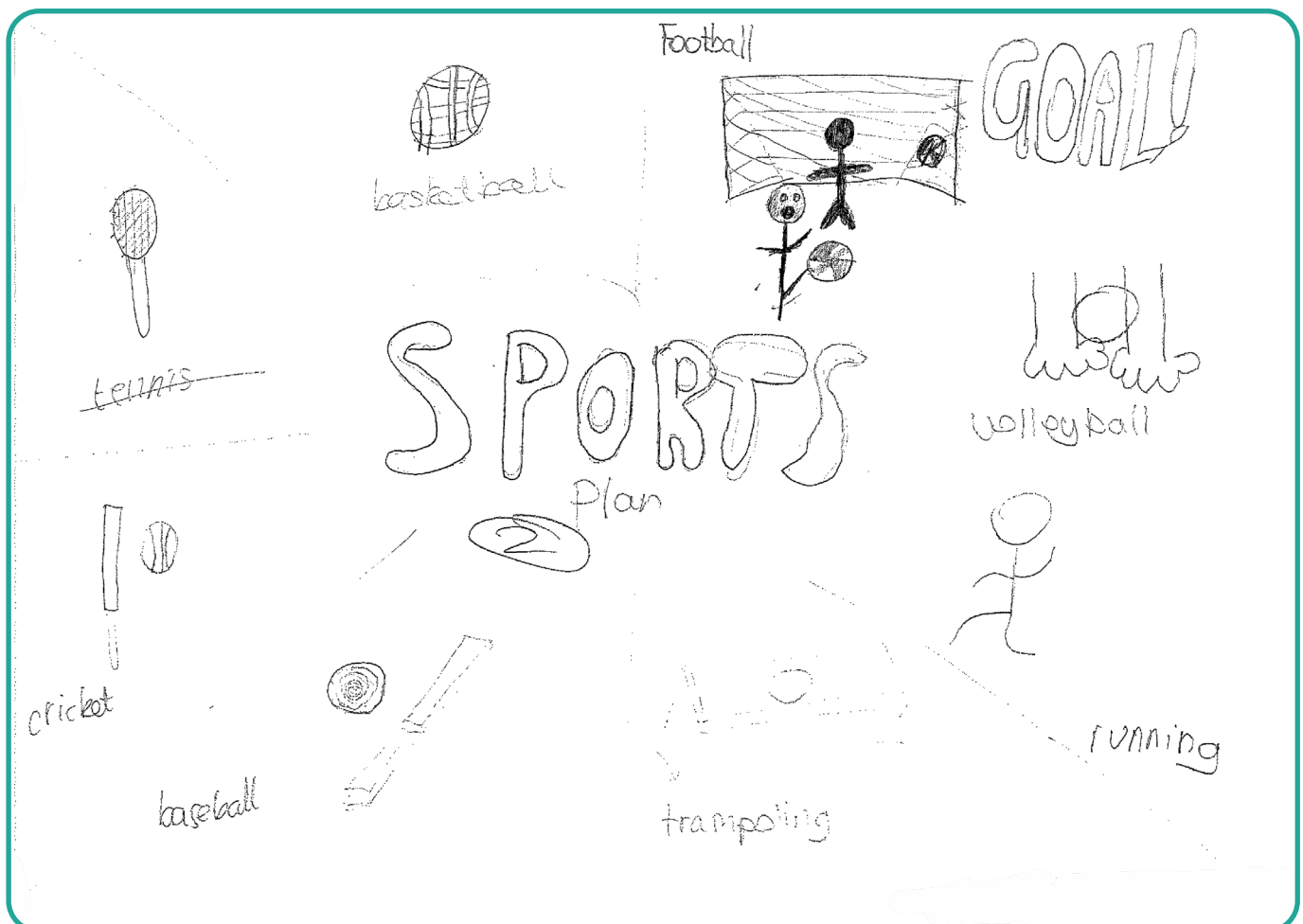
What is the priority addressing?	How might this priority be delivered?	What are the measures of success?
<p>Carers need consistent, easy-to-access information to support themselves and those they care for.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refresh the Council's carer web pages, ensuring regular updates and accessibility for all ages and literacy levels. Support the provider of the carers contract to offer training and workshops to carers, including digital literacy, caring skills, and self-advocacy. Develop simple, co-designed printed information packs for settings such as schools, GP surgeries, hospitals, and libraries. Integrate carer advice into other key transition points (e.g. hospital discharge, moving into adulthood, end of life care). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carers report improved awareness of and access to relevant information (via survey and review). Website data show increased usage and engagement. Increase in carers accessing training and support workshops. Co-designed carers' assessment launched and positively evaluated.

Priority 4: Support carers to live well, remain safe, and maintain their health and aspirations

What is the priority addressing?	How might this priority be delivered?	What are the measures of success?
<p>Caring can negatively impact a person's mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing. Carers need personalised support to maintain their own quality of life.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-design carer support services, with tailored wellbeing offers. Ensure carer wellbeing checks in assessments and reviews are being completed. Promote flexible support through the Family Help model for young and parent carers. Increase availability and visibility of direct payments for carers. Work with housing, transport, and community access teams to reduce barriers for carers and their loved ones. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in carers accessing preventative support (e.g. peer groups, therapy, community activities). Increase in the use of direct payments for carer wellbeing needs. Carers report more frequent social contact and reduced isolation (ASCOF). Positive impact reported in annual reviews and surveys.

Priority 5: Provide a broader range of opportunities for respite and breaks

What is the priority addressing?	How might this priority be delivered?	What are the measures of success?
<p>Many carers feel overwhelmed due to a lack of regular, meaningful breaks. Flexible respite is essential to maintain wellbeing and prevent crisis.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-review the offer of short breaks and respite for all ages, including emergency and crisis breaks. • Ensure young carers have equitable access to leisure, clubs, and school holiday schemes (e.g. HAF). • Improve access to breaks through better communication and simplified processes for carers direct payments. • Provide carers with emergency planning tools to prepare for times they cannot provide care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in carers accessing preventative support (e.g. peer groups, therapy, community activities). • Increase in the use of direct payments for carer wellbeing needs. • Carers report more frequent social contact and reduced isolation (ASCOF). • Positive impact reported in annual reviews and surveys.



Priority 6: Ensure carers' voices are heard, valued, and influential, with meaningful involvement in how services are designed and delivered

What is the priority addressing?	How might this priority be delivered?	What are the measures of success?
<p>Carers want to be equal partners in decision-making about services and the care of their loved ones. Their insight is essential to effective support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a Carers Partnership Forum for co-design, co-decision making, and co-production of services. • Launch a live carers survey platform to capture real-time feedback. • Create a "Get Involved" page highlighting ways carers can shape local services, including service design, interview panels, and local forums. • Embed carer feedback into all service reviews, assessments, and commissioning processes. • Co-produce clear, coordinated transition pathways to support young carers as they move into adulthood and parent carers as they transition into the adult carer role. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active Carers Forum established with regular participation. • Co-produced carer services, including new carers' assessments and payment systems. • Increased feedback received via the live survey and used to shape decisions. • Carers report feeling heard, valued, and influential in service development (ASCOF and internal evaluation). • Percentage of eligible young carers and parent carers informed about transition pathways, supported through a formal transition process, and reporting ongoing engagement and preparedness during and after their transition.



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9. Document History

Approval and Review

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