

Report of the Strategic Director of Children's Services to the meeting of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny to be held on 7 September 2016.

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Subject:

Interim report on current budget pressure and steps being made to address these pressures.

Summary statement:

The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee received the First Quarter Financial Position Statement for 2016-17 on the 20 July 2016. The committee requested for an interim report from the Children and Adult Services Strategic Directors explaining the reasons for the budget pressures in the current year and steps being taken to address them.

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Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Children's Services



1. SUMMARY

The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee received the First Quarter Financial Position Statement for 2016-17 on the 20 July 2016.

The committee requested for an interim report from the Children and Adult Services Strategic Directors explaining the reasons for the budget pressures in the current year and steps being made to address them.

2. BACKGROUND

The first quarter financial position statement for 2016-17 highlighted that Council was forecasting to spend £6.6m above an approved budget of £378.0m.

The main variances were within the areas of Adults & Community Services (£3.5m) and Children's Services (£1.8m).

The report also stated that there is a potential £7.3m shortfall to the agreed 2016-17 budget savings programme of £45.6m. This shortfall is from the Travel Assistance Programme (£3.0m), Adult & Community Services (2.6m) and Children Services (£1.6m).

The savings shortfall of £7.3m is incorporated into the overall budget overspend of £6.6m.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Children's Services are successful in caring for a relatively lower number of children in care compared to other local Authorities through timely assessment, support and interventions. The cost of caring for these children, as is the case for most Local Authorities, is challenging due to increasingly complex care arrangements and statutory requirements which over a period of time has led to a higher number of non in-house residential care placements and reduction in lower cost Independent Fostering Agency placements.

Ofsted introduced higher standards of regulated care provision in April 2015 which has led to a shrinking of the market as some providers have withdrawn as they find the costs of meeting these higher expectations prohibitive. There has also been a significant uplift in the fees charged since 2013 for independent residential and fostering care. The average weekly cost of external residential care has risen from £2,037 in 2013-14 to £2,421 in 2015-16 which is an increase of 18.9%. The average weekly cost of external foster care has increased from £1,401 to £1,833 an increase of 30.8% in the same period.

Bradford also has the fastest growing youth population in the UK. This brings immense opportunities and young people are the District's key asset. However, there are also increasing demands and complexity of need on Children's Services.

Three case studies are provided in Appendix 1 to illustrate some of the complex



and challenging behaviours the services are responding to.

There is also significant churn and mobility in and out of Bradford every year. We currently care for around 20 unaccompanied asylum seeking children and recently, over a 4 week period, accommodated 17 children from 3 families from Central and Eastern European origin.

There is currently a reported overspend of £0.7m on the external placement budget for looked after children.

The fees and allowances budgets of £16.7m are also forecasted to overspend by £1.1m broken down as follows:-

- Special Guardians Allowances - £0.5m
- Adoption Allowances - £0.3m
- Fostering Fees and Allowances - £0.3m

The service also proposed budget savings of £0.6m planned by bringing looked after children cared outside of Bradford back into the district and £0.8m by reducing the number of looked after children by 75 over 2 years from 2016 to 2018. These budget savings are currently forecasted to be undelivered in 2016-17.

The number of looked after children and children in permanent support arrangements are as follows:-

Type of Placement	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17 (Qtr1)	% Increase from 2012-13
Placed with Parents	90	82	84	86	91	1%
Placed for Adoption	39	53	63	38	25	-36%
Friends and Families	201	189	218	206	207	3%
Foster Parents	386	383	349	365	372	-4%
Fostering Agencies	39	37	32	32	35	-10%
Residential Care	60	70	68	63	58	-3%
Residential Care (Ext)	40	41	46	50	48	20%
Other *	34	32	37	34	34	0%
Sub Total (Number of Looked After Children)	889	886	897	874	870	-2%
Residence Orders	78	81	65	69	67	-14%
Adoption Orders	213	224	270	271	263	23%
Special Guardianship Orders	122	157	240	277	279	129%
Sub Total (Chd in Permanent Arrangements)	413	462	575	617	609	47%
Total Children Receiving Support	1,302	1,348	1,472	1,491	1,479	14%



The table below provides the number of looked after children per 10,000 children aged 0 to 17 years:-

Local Authority	No of looked after Children per 10,000 children 0 to 17 years
Bradford	63 per 10,000
Calderdale	70 per 10,000
Kirklees	63 per 10,000
Leeds	78 per 10,000
Wakefield	72 per 10,000
Blackburn	83 per 10,000
Knowsley	95 per 10,000
Oldham	68 per 10,000
Rochdale	104 per 10,000

The table below provides the current Children Services budgetary position across neighbouring authorities:-

Local Authority	2016-17 Finance Forecast	Main Variances
Leeds	3.8m Overspend	£3.5m pressure on External Residential Places, £1.4m Independent Fostering Agency, Home to School Transport £1.7m
Kirklees	£8.6m Overspend	£4.2m pressure on Safeguarding & Family Support; Demand Led Activity, £2.9m Agency cost on Safeguarding & Family Support Services
Calderdale	£1.9m Overspend	£1.5m pressure on placement costs.
Wakefield	2016-17 Position to be Reported in September	

Children Services – Actions to mitigate Pressure

The Journey to Excellence programme is the main mechanism through which Children’s Services will deliver the required budget savings. This programme includes (of relevance to these budget savings and pressures):

- Increase the reach and effectiveness of early help including Families First.
- Restructure key teams in Children’s Services to create a new Targeted Early Help Service to be in place by the end of March 2017.
- New model of care and integrated working for looked after children to reduce number of purchase placements and unplanned placement breakdowns.
- New dedicated CAMHS team for looked-after children and adoption and three in-house children’s home to care for children with the most complex needs (those most likely to move out of area).
- Social Care Innovation bid submitted and progressed to full bid. Decision expected in October 2016. This will speed up implementation of the above and



also support implementation of the Mockingbird foster scheme. This approach creates Lead hub foster carers who provide support and guidance across a network of other foster carers.

A Change Board meets on a monthly basis. A programme team is now in place reporting to Assistant Director (Children's Services). Programme plans and risk registers are in place and tracked.

Reducing numbers of looked-after children

Signs of Safety implementation. This approach safely focuses on families developing their own plans around which we then build support. By the end of 2016, over 1300 people will have been trained in this approach. In other areas using Signs of Safety, a reduction in the numbers of looked after children has been achieved.

By the end of January 2017, it is intended that we will apply Signs of Safety to how we make early help, child protection and looked after plans with families. This approach always focuses on the families own extended network so that we do not miss any opportunities for support and care within the family. Engagement with this approach is positive and we can expect to see the benefits in reductions in looked after children during 2017 with sustained implementation required over several years.

Early Help and Families First. By the end of December 2016, we will have in place:

- A refreshed Early Help strategy and action plan
- Ensure that all key teams support the Families First payment by results
- A new Early Help/ single point of contact
- A new Early Help family plan aligned to Signs of Safety
- Multi-agency panels to identify children and families who need co-ordinated early help aligned to the 7 children's centre clusters

The new Targeted Early Help structure will be in place by the end of March 2017. Structure agreed, Service Manager assimilation agreed and team manager assimilations underway.

Robust tracking of discharge of Care Orders and Placement with Parents

Arrangements are in place to track timely progress for discharge of care orders once endorsed by a looked after children review. We are also ensuring that children on care orders Placed with Parents do not remain looked after for longer than necessary. This process has identified 8 children for whom we could safely end looked after status within the next 6-months subject to capacity within Legal Services. This would reduce associated social work and care planning costs but may also require fees associated with alternative care arrangements.



External placements (and moves from residential into foster placements)

The intention is to reduce the number of children in out-of-area/external placements and more looked after children in foster placements. The data above highlights that this has been achieved but only to a small degree but needs sustained focus to achieve the target of reducing looked after children by 75 and purchased placements by 25 by April 2018 (measured against 2016 baseline).

Challenge has been put in place across the cohort of children in purchased and residential placements.

Tender processes are underway to commission a block residential contract which will reduce costs associated with the present arrangements for extending the previous contract.

Fees and allowances

Fostering. In August 2016, Children's Change Board received a plan to review fostering allowance. The revised proposals will set out what savings can be achieved within the financial year after benchmarking with other West Yorkshire local authorities. An options paper will be in place by the end of September.

Special Guardianship. Local authorities are required to make a range of support services available in their area to meet the needs of people affected by special guardianship.

Special Guardianship support is defined as:

- Financial support
- Support groups for all the parties affected
- Assistance with contact arrangements
- Therapeutic services for the child
- Respite care
- Counselling, advice and information
- Help in accessing mainstream services

The local authority is required to regularly review the Special Guardianship support plan. This should take place at least annually or more frequently if there is a change in the person's circumstances.

Bradford's current policy is that all carers who take on an SGO in respect of a child who was Looked After immediately prior to the making of the SGO are entitled to receive a means tested assessment in respect on an ongoing SGO allowance for the child.

Allowances are calculated to take account of the carers existing financial resources as well as universal benefits such as Child Benefit and any tax credits they may receive. The average weekly of financial support to a child on an SGO is £125.83.



A review of SGO allowance policy is underway to ensure consistency without further increasing the financial burden on the local authority. This will be addressed within the wider modelling of fees across fostering, SGO and adoption with an options paper to be considered by Children's Services DMT by the end of September. This will be required to proceed to Executive for agreement.

Collaboration

Bradford seeks opportunities to collaborate on strategic developments and service delivery across the sub-region. The DCS takes an active lead across West Yorkshire and Yorkshire and Humber. There are a number of examples of collaborative work, including the administration of the White Rose Framework (procurement of residential care), the emerging joined up approach to CSE across West Yorkshire Councils and the Police and Crime Commissioner, and the regionalisation of adoption services.

As part of our Journey to Excellence and the submission to the DfE Innovation Programme, Bradford wants to adopt the 'No Wrong Door' care approach initiated by North Yorkshire. It has also invested in Signs of Safety which is a strength based approach to assessing and working with families. However, there may be further opportunities to transform services to improve outcomes for our children and young people and deliver increased efficiencies across regional footprints.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

Please see above.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

The required changes and savings are tracked by Change Boards in both, and working across Departments. A programme plan and risk register is in place and tracked.

Changes regarding policy and fees would be subject to any required consultation and taken to Executive when required.

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

Any proposed changes regarding policy and/or fees would be subject to any required consultation and taken to Executive when required. Proposed changes would be required to demonstrate compliance with any statutory requirements.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

Equality Impact statements are in place for the key projects.



7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

None.

7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

None.

7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

None at this stage.

7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

None at this stage.

7.6 TRADE UNION

Trade Union involvement is in place for key decisions, for example, the development of the new Targeted Early Help Service.

7.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS

Affects all wards.

7.8 AREA COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS (for reports to Area Committees only)

Affects all areas.

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None.

9. OPTIONS

To note the saving targets, pressures and plans in place.

To note the need for a continued assertive and intensive approach to achieving the required changes and savings whilst ensuring statutory duties are met.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to note the legislative context and pressures impacting on plans to deliver the required budget savings.

The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the programme and plans in places to track required changes and savings whilst ensuring statutory responsibilities are delivered.



11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Case Studies.

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None.



APPENDIX 1 CASE STUDIES

Case Study 1:

Child A was identified as being at risk of CSE when she was only 13 years of age, as a result of intelligence that she was receiving cigarettes in exchange for sexual activity. Initially, this child was resistant to all interventions that were offered and over time the risks increased and she was considered at very high risk of CSE. She was using cannabis daily, going missing from home, associating with much older males and had received treatment for sexually transmitted infections. The risks became so great that she was taken into care and was placed outside the Bradford District. Intensive work was undertaken by the local authority's Placement Support team and Barnardo's Turnaround project. Both services were persistent, despite initially meeting with a lot of resistance from the child. Eventually this persistence paid off and she began to engage with services. She began to recognise and acknowledge the risks and harm that she had experienced. She recently returned to Bradford and is again living with her mother, still receiving a service from the Placement Support team. The most recent assessment has reduced her CSE risk to low because she is fully engaged in group work provided by the Turnaround service. She is the only child from the group to have attended every single session. She has not used cannabis recently and she has taken her GCSEs and has applied for further education courses.

Case Study 2:

Child B is a girl who has been known to the Hub for several years. She was living away from her family home with a much older male who was exploiting her. She was resistant to any support and would not engage with any service such was the impact of her victimisation. Many attempts were made to intervene with this child and she was placed in a foster home within Bradford. The quality of consistent care that she received at the foster home had a positive impact on the child. She was able to accept other support and gradually her risk assessment level reduced. However, the child then suffered bereavement and disengaged from the professionals who had been supporting her. She returned to her previous associates and the assessment of risk of CSE increased significantly. Over a period of time, the girl went through several cycles of engagement, followed by disengagement and increased risk as a consequence of emotionally difficult events. This young woman has now turned 18 and has begun to engage with agencies. She has a close relationship with her Turnaround worker and has undertaken video interviews with the police, who are working to gather evidence for prosecution of those who have abused her.



Case Study 3:

Case c

C is a child with complex emotional and psychological needs who became looked after when she was in her early teens. It is suspected that she was a victim of CSE prior to coming into care. She was initially placed in a Bradford Childrens Home, however there were significant issues around missing and on-going vulnerability to CSE. After 5 months an external residential placement away from Bradford was identified to address the safeguarding concerns and she remained there for 6 months at a cost of £3,500 per week. While she made some progress, she continued to have challenging behaviours, with missing episodes where she put herself at significant risk. The local police force expressed concerns about her safety and the provider gave notice. Identifying an alternative placement was difficult, and, she was placed in a specialist 1:1 time limited placement at a cost of £4,500 per week. This assessment recommended a longer term 1-1 placement would best meet her needs and social care searched without success for a suitable vacant placement for some weeks, during which time she returned to Bradford. On return to Bradford police, social workers and others continued to be concerned about missing episodes and potential CSE risk. Although social workers, the Police, health professionals, the residential placement and others have worked closely together to minimise the risk the department continued to search for an external 1-1 placement better able to manage the complexity of her emotional needs. After some months a placement came free and she transferred there at a cost of £3,800 per week. It is likely that she will return to Bradford when she gets older (sooner if the placement breaks down) and ensuring that her health, educational and emotional needs are met in a way that ensures that she is safe remains a focus of our planning. In her first two years of care, residential costs to the Authority were in the order of £400,000.

