

BRIEFING NOTE

Sustainability Strategy for Children's Services 2016 to 2021 Progress Report

Background

On 14th November 2016 Children and Young People's Budget Sustainability Proposals were presented to Cabinet as part of a wider report updating the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

The proposals sought to set a realistic budget given the forecast of expenditure reported in the September 2016 Budget Monitoring Report which projected a £7.578m overspend in Children's Services with a further £0.270m overspend on associated legal costs. The report recommended setting a budget and financial plan over the period 2017/18 to 2020/21 which would enable the delivery of good quality sustainable children's social care services.

The robustness of the sustainability strategy was subject to comprehensive internal review and external challenge completed by the Practice Partner for Children's Improvement (Lincolnshire County Council).

The investment proposals were developed using a number of assumptions based on what we understood at the time about the demand levels in Rotherham. The number of Children in Need (CiN) was 1897, the number of children with a Child Protection Plan (CPP) was 305, the number of Looked after Children (LAC) in September was 443 and a rise to 460 was predicted by the end of the financial year. It clearly stated that if the number of LAC increased beyond the estimated level then there would be further pressure on social care budgets and a risk that the reported position, and projections into future years, would be adversely affected.

The number of LAC placed at the end of each month from September 2016 to March 2017 is shown in Table 1. This growth in placements over and above 460 was a significant factor in the 2016/17 final outturn position for the directorate, a £2.344m over spend.

Table 1: Monthly Number of LAC Placements (Sep-16 to Mar-17)

Date	Number of LAC
30 th September 2016	443
21 st October 2016 *	460
30 th November 2016	472
31 st December 2016	488
31 st January 2017	482
28 th February 2017	486
31 st March 2017	487

* final information for October 2016 due to system implementation

In order to fund between 480 and 490 placements from April 2017, the Service with support from colleagues in Finance set the detailed budget for 2017/18 using zero based budgeting principles. Finance modelling was revisited and where possible additional funding transferred into the placement budget to fund the predicted costs associated with a care population of between 480 and 490.

Introduction

The investments chosen were based on a need to continue to improve the quality of practice and outcomes for children and young people whilst at the same time acknowledging that the Council was facing large budget reductions at the same time as increasing costs and demand.

The LAC placement baseline, on 1st April 2017, was 487 and it is from this baseline that impact of the investment in social care placements should be measured.

The future growth in placement numbers which was estimated in September 2016 predicted that, with no preventative action, Rotherham could expect an additional 48 placements during 2017/18 on top of the baseline starting position on 1st April 2017.

The Edge of Care initiatives developed as part of the CYPS plan for social care sustainability aimed to prevent 52 children entering (or remaining in) care in 2017/18. Therefore the net target reduction [*forecast number prevented from entering/(or remaining in) care, minus predicted growth (52 minus 48)*] in 2017/18 was 4 placements. Given a starting point of 487 placements and a reduction of 4 during the year; the target at year-end to meet financial sustainability was 483.

The cumulative net reduction in looked after children (edge of care prevention minus growth) over the four year period of the Sustainability Strategy 2017/18 to 2020/21 is 61 from the baseline position at the 1st April 2017. Assuming growth in numbers does not exceed the estimated 48 per year, the children in care population at the 31st March 2021 is estimated to be 426.

Table 2: Net Reduction in Looked After Children

Year	Net Reduction in Looked After Children
2017/18	(4)
2018/19	(13)
2019/20	(22)
2020/21	(22)
Total	487 – (61) = 426

Other placement based initiatives in the strategy were focused on reducing placement breakdown and increasing the proportion of looked after children in family based fostering settings which, in addition to giving children in care the best start in life, are more cost effective than residential settings outside of the local authority.

Progress of Sustainability Plan Initiatives

CYPS 1A – Foster Carer Payments Scheme, Support and Development

	Baseline	Target 2017/18	Forecast 2017/18	(Favourable) / Adverse
Investment (£m)		1.276	1.276	0.000
Cost Reduction (Gross £m)		(1.374)	(1.340)	0.034
Cost Reduction (Net £m)		(0.098)	(0.064)	0.034
Additional Foster Placements		15	15	0
LA Fostering placements (%)	43%	48%	42%	6%

The implementation of the allowances offer, better wraparound support and a dedicated marketing officer have all contributed to exceeding the targeted growth in the net number in local authority foster carers to date. However the expected corresponding fall in the number of LAC being placed in more expensive settings (Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) and Out of Authority Residential Homes) has not materialised; due to an unforeseen and extraordinary increase in the overall number of children in care. Additional places are being used for new entrants rather than “step down” of existing children from residential / external placements. The percentage of local authority foster places as a proportion of the overall care population has reduced as a direct consequence. The number of LA fostering places has increased by 7%; but overall LAC has gone up by 13% since the approval of the strategy.

By the end of July there were (a net) eight new in-house fostering placements. If the recruitment of foster carers continues at the same rate for the remainder of the year the forecast may well exceed 15. There are up to 13 residential placements ready now for ‘step down’ once we have the right foster carer matches available.

CYPS 1B – Therapeutic Service

	Baseline	Target 2017/18	Forecast 2017/18	(Favourable) / Adverse
Investment (£m)	n/a	0.270	0.270	0.000

This budget investment was for additional clinical practitioners to deliver highly responsive and intensive interventions for Rotherham’s children in care identified as needing it most. It operates in conjunction with the fostering ‘offer’ and special guardianships whereby children ‘most at risk’ within Rotherham have the access they need to good quality and responsive wrap around therapeutic support to address specific emotional and mental well-being needs.

The recruitment process is complete and the Lead Therapeutic Social Worker, Therapeutic Worker and Therapeutic Intervention Worker are now in post. A Clinical Psychologist started in August, commissioned through Sheffield Health and Social Care NHS Foundation Trust. The impact of the additional resource has been utilised to support children who have a high / very high strengths and difficulty questionnaire score. At present the additional support provided has meant the children in the cohort (10) have not experienced any further placement disruptions and 1 child has achieved a permanent match with a foster carer. The longer term outcomes for

these young people will be compared to a controlled group in Spring 2018 with a view to expanding this type of support if it demonstrates to improve outcomes to the child and reduce costs to the organisation.

CYPS 2 – Family Group Conferencing

	Baseline	Target 2017/18	Forecast 2017/18	(Favourable) / Adverse
Investment (£m)		0.164	0.164	0.000
Cost Reduction (Gross £m)		(0.165)	(0.330)	(0.165)
Cost Reduction (Net £m)		(0.001)	(0.166)	(0.165)
LAC Reduction	0	15	30	(15)

Family Group Conferencing (FGC) is an effective tool for identifying and engaging with wider family members at an early stage of concern about a child. This service seeks to maximise the number of children able to live safely with their extended family and therefore reduce the number of children coming into care and for those in care on a voluntary basis, return them home sooner. This service improves outcomes for the children and young people and reduces the financial pressure within the LAC budget.

The service is being delivered through an in-house team. The target in terms of LAC prevention for Family Group Conferencing is 15 this year, increasing to between 25 and 30 in subsequent years. Performance to date suggests that this year the service will exceed its target and prevent 30 children entering care.

The Family Group Conferencing Team was established in April 2017. Following an intense period of training and shadowing, including support from Lincolnshire County Council and the Family Rights Group, the team began to receive referrals in May 2017.

At the end of August 2017, 54 referrals had been received by the team including: 22 families with a Child In Need (CIN) – including two CIN cases that were in the Public Law Outline (PLO) process; 18 families with children registered on a Child Protection Plan (including five in the PLO process); 4 where care proceedings have been issued; and 10 families where the children are Looked After. (The PLO process occurs when the family is told that if nothing changes the Council will make an application to the family court seeking removal of the child.)

18 conferences have taken place and three 6 week reviews have been successfully completed. Tracking is being implemented to demonstrate a de-escalation of need for all families who engage with the service. Evaluation of the first four months shows that currently 15 children have been prevented from an expected entry into care.

CYPS 3 – Special Guardianship Looked After Children

Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) offer the opportunity for family, friends or existing foster carers to give a permanent home to the child without Social Care input. This year there are two new SGO as at the end of July. There are currently 57

long term matched placements and 14 further placements. Each long term carer has been contacted with proposals to convert to SGO. A new SGO Support Officer post has been appointed. There is a reasonable expectation that up to 7 placements will convert during this financial year.

	Baseline	Target 2017/18	Forecast 2017/18	(Favourable) / Adverse
Investment (£m)		0.052	0.052	0.000
Cost Reduction (Gross £m)		(0.066)	(0.077)	(0.011)
Cost Reduction (Net £m)		(0.014)	(0.025)	(0.011)
LAC Reduction		6	7	(1)

CYPS 4 – Pause Project

Rotherham works with a number of mothers who have had multiple children taken into care. Pause, an organisation co-founded by Sophie Humphreys, former head of safeguarding at Hackney, works entirely outside of the usual local authority structure and independently of the social care services. The programme engages with mothers on a one-to-one basis, creating a bespoke programme of intensive therapeutic activities and practical support.

Women working with Pause are supported to focus on themselves to take control of their lives. To do this they are required to take Long Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC) during the intervention, thereby creating a space to pause, reflect, learn and aspire.

The feasibility study identified 20 Rotherham women who have been the subject of a repeat removal of a child following pregnancy. Further consideration of this will be subject to a separate paper to Cabinet in the coming months but the initial work has indicated that between 5 and 10 placements might be avoided per year.

The Pause report was presented to DLT in June and identified that over a three year period 434 children were (or would have been) in scope.

CYPS 5 – Edge of Care

The Edge of Care team offer evidenced based family therapy and direct support to young people and their families in crisis, to enable them to remain within their immediate or wider extended family.

	Baseline	Target 2017/18	Forecast 2017/18	(Favourable) / Adverse
Investment (£m)	N/A	0.350	0.204	(0.146)
Cost Reduction (Net) (£m)	N/A	(0.165)	(0.096)	0.069
Net Saving	N/A	0.185	0.108	(0.077)
LAC Reduction	N/A	15	15	0

The Edge of Care Team has been established. The team will receive referrals in October 2017 and evidence of the team's impact will emerge in January 2018. The target number of 15 children who will avoid becoming looked after is ambitious in the remaining six months of the financial year. However there is capacity to work with 25 families, although the number of children in each family is unknown and will influence the outcomes.

CYPS 6 – Multi-systemic Therapy (MST)

	Baseline	Target 2017/18	Forecast 2017/18	(Favourable) / Adverse
Investment (£m)		0.000	0.000	0.000
Cost Reduction (Net) (£m)		(0.044)	(0.088)	(0.044)
Net Saving		(0.044)	(0.088)	(0.044)
LAC Reduction		4	8	(4)

MST is an intensive therapeutic programme that works within the whole ecology of a young person. The MST therapist works with the whole family; the parents, the community and the school at the same time. The aim is to work in a solution-focused, strengths-based approach to empower the family to take responsibility for solving problems and to improve family functioning. The model acknowledges the fact that the family will be there for the young person into the future and beyond any service intervention.

A shared service agreement is in place between Barnsley and Rotherham, each authority shares fifty percent of the cost and fifty percent of the capacity. The cost of this to RMBC is met through the Troubled Families Grant and so there is no call on mainstream resources to fund this investment. Original estimates were that MST could prevent four children entering care per year.

Referrals to date include 5 Children in Need (CiN) cases and 4 Care Proceedings (CP) cases (including 1 at Public Law Outline (PLO), Pre-proceeding meeting). All referrers have indicated that the young person in question was 'at risk' of entering care or custody. It is forecast that there will be a LAC reduction of 8 in 2017/18 arising from this project (5 to the end of July).

CYPS 7 – Reunification Project

	Baseline	Target 2017/18	Forecast 2017/18	(Favourable) / Adverse
Investment (£m)		0.090	0	(0.090)
Cost Reduction (Net) (£m)		(0.132)	0	0.132
Net Saving		(0.042)	0	0.042
LAC Reduction		12	0	12

The reunification scheme was delivered from April 2016 by the NSPCC and was due to run for two years. The second year was decommissioned at the end of March

2017 following a review of the expected outcomes. The expected reduction in number and cost of LAC from this service will instead come from the predicted overachievement of Family Group Conferencing.

An alternative reunification service is being developed through an application to the Life Chances Fund. The Council has received a grant in principle offer to contribute towards outcome payments should the new initiative get the go-ahead. It will involve delivery of a new adaptation of MST (Family Integrated Transition) and is earmarked for implementation in summer 2018.

CYPS 8 – Single Assessment Review Duty Team

	Baseline	Target 2017/18	Forecast 2017/18	(Favourable) / Adverse
Investment (£m)		0.166	0.166	0.000
Cost Reduction (Net) (£m)		0.000	0.000	0.000
Net Saving		0.166	0.166	0.000

As part of the improvement journey the timeliness and quality of assessments has been a key focus. Moving from a four to a five Duty team structure and a cycle of 20 days between each duty week has improved the ability to progress work, it has maintained caseloads at a manageable level and afforded team managers sufficient time to provide robust management oversight and improve the quality of practice. Duty Team 5 is in place, effective 1st April 2017.

CYPS 9 – Appointment of Newly Qualified Social Workers (x 22)

	Baseline	Target 2017/18	Forecast 2017/18	(Favourable) / Adverse
Investment (£m)		0.900	0.900	0.000
Cost Reduction (Net) (£m)		(0.330)	(0.330)	0.000
Net Saving		0.570	0.570	0.000
Agency reduction		22	22	0

In order to meet the demands of the Workforce Development Improvement actions in the Children and Young People's Service Improvement Plan, the Council recruited a cohort of 22 Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW) into the Children and Young People's Services in October 2016. It is business critical to continue this investment and the infrastructure is in place to support them with high quality placements and support. The recruitment of 22 permanent NQSWs has, and a new intake of 17 in Autumn 2017 will, fill existing social worker vacancies and help to reduce the use of agency workers over the next 12 months; reducing cost and creating a permanent stable workforce. As the end of their first year in practice approaches, of the 22 NQSWs recruited in October 2016, 21 remain in social work posts.

Continuing the strategy of growing experienced and qualified social workers will over the medium and longer term enable the transition from a significant reliance on agency staff, which has approached 20% of the workforce over the last two years, to

permanent employees. The percentage of agency staff is expected to fall below 10% from April 2018.

It is important to note that because of the statutory nature of social work, a need to keep caseloads manageable and to meet the statutory timescales for service delivery, a level of agency staff will always be required. The Directorate intends for this to be less than 10% - as noted above - against a national average of 16%.

The number of agency workers in Social Care has fallen from 77 at 1st April, to 62 at the end of August 2017. Of this 62, ten are in temporary posts approved for a time limited period to assist with the Complex Abuse and Operation Stovewood Investigations.

The CYPS, and significantly the Children’s Social Care, employee budget is forecasting to underspend this financial year. Agency costs are expected to reduce by 26% compared to the amount spent in 2016/17, a cost reduction of £1.693m; and 40% (£3.232m) compared to spend in 2015/16.

CYPS10 – Workforce Development and Practice Improvement

	Baseline	Target 2017/18	Forecast 2017/18	(Favourable) / Adverse
Investment (£m) *		0.339	0.339	0.000
Investment (£m) **		0.489	0.489	0.000
Cost Reduction (Net) (£m)		0.000	0.000	0.000
Net Investment		0.828	0.828	0.000

* Includes the costs of an expanded learning and development structure; the commissioning of bespoke learning and practice improvement operating models; ** additional resources for backfill whilst training undertaken.

Professional social work practice in Rotherham has been the subject of much scrutiny in recent years. The quality and impact of Social Work was one of the key issues leading to the inadequate OFSTED judgement in 2014. In order to ensure that the quality of Social Work practice consistently and systematically improves, a learning and development programme for Social Workers – through the professional journey from Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE), through the practitioner career and into Management and Leadership levels – is essential. The most improved local authorities (Hackney and Leeds) have demonstrated the importance of linking social work development to professional methodology in achieving better outcomes, both for children and on inspection.

It is essential that Rotherham Council provides training and development for its Social Workers in order to: improve practice and produce better outcomes for children, which could lead to longer term savings; reduce the risk of continued inadequate OFSTED judgements; and help to improve the retention of permanent Social Workers.

Across the directorate new methodologies including Signs of Safety and Restorative Practice are being rolled out. Leaving Care and Looked after Children Teams will also be trained in Social Pedagogy following the successful application for external partner funding which will pay for the pilot (first year).

Improvements in practice are expected to follow including good compliance levels, a majority of “good” (or better) case audits and an enhanced organisational culture with higher staff retention rates.

Overall summary / conclusion on the investments to date

All transformation projects are established (except Pause and Reunification which are both due for re-submission this financial year). The projects all have targets individually and collectively that are overseen by the CYPS Departmental Leadership Team (DLT) Transformation Board. All live projects are on target to deliver, or exceed original expectations; however the impact has to be seen in the light of unprecedented demand impacting on LAC numbers over and above the original growth and demand estimates in September 2016.

The overall change in the LAC numbers arising from these projects is a forecast net decrease of 8.

Summary of delivery against the targeted outcomes from the Sustainability Strategy in 2017/18

	Target 2017/18	Forecast 2017/18	(Favourable) / Adverse
Investment (£m)	4.096	3.860	(0.236)
Cost Reduction (Gross) (£m)	(2.276)	(2.261)	0.015
Net Investment/Saving (£m)	1.820	1.599	(0.221)
LAC Reduction	52	60	(8)

The individual projects are on target to deliver expected outcomes and achieve a reduction in expenditure compared to the alternative option of “do nothing”. However due to the significant increase in LAC to 521 (+7%) since 1st April 2017, there is a forecast net cost pressure on the CYPS budget of £2.592m. Without the initiatives in the Sustainability Strategy, the in-year pressure could have been more severe, a further £2.261m on top of the current overspend.

Monthly Number of LAC Placements (Mar-17 to Aug-17)

Date	Number of LAC
1 st April 2017	487
30 th April 2017	500
31 st May 2017	500
30 th June 2017	516
31 st July 2017	517
31 st August 2017	521

Complex Abuse

The significant increase in the number of looked after children referred to above is entirely due to the unforeseen and extraordinary impact of the complex abuse

inquiry, of which the costs are substantial. Without this, CYPS would be reporting a break-even budget position. However, instead the forecast at 31st July 2017 and reported to the September Cabinet was for a Directorate overspend of £2.592m.

The forecast includes 39 children and young people in care who are directly linked to the investigation. It does not incorporate any further placements, up to an additional 70 based on “worst case scenario” estimates, which could exacerbate the current position by up to £2.3m in this financial year.