

CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES RECOVERY PLAN 2011 ONWARDS

The projected £1.5 million overspend is in large part a continuation of the pressure in children's social care for the last few years. At the end of 2010/11 social care for children overspent by £1m. However, this was to offset by underspends elsewhere within Children's services and the use of grants.

Proposed Long term Changes

1. Identification of the on going pressures

The number of children that are being brought into the care system is now at unsustainable levels. The Munro report is now suggesting that working with children in their family setting is more beneficial. Plans are currently being developed to create an Intensive Family Support service. This approach will have both financial benefits and better outcomes for the child and family and will act as a bridge between Early Intervention Services and Specialist Social Care Services.

2. Changes needed for pressure to be met

A shifting of social care practice and emphasis is required. The bigger the resource the quicker the impact is felt.

3. Timescale of impact

This approach will need investment initially in training and mentoring but over a period of 2/3 years should result in fewer children in care.

Short to Medium term Plans

4. Vacancy Management

Of the £1.5m overspend, £0.6m relates to the vacancy target; savings achieved by delaying appointments or keeping vacant posts empty. The action here is to achieve staffing savings on non social work posts of at least £0.2m. It is unlikely that any staffing savings can be achieved in Safeguarding and Wellbeing due to the increased costs of employing agency social workers. However, when the backlog of cases to be reviewed is back down at acceptable levels plus the appointment of permanent staff this should, over the next 12 months, result in lower staffing costs and therefore reduction in the overspend.

5. Proposed Reshaping of the Safeguarding and Wellbeing Service

The Executive Head for Safeguarding and Wellbeing proposed a reshaping of the Safeguarding and Wellbeing service that will see changes to the teams contained within that service. This proposed reshaping will be supported by an evidence based paper which will lay out the pressures on the "intake" team in dealing with the increasing backlog of cases. The work of the Family Intervention Team (FIT) will also be explored.

6. Projected Savings elsewhere in Children's Services

The initial analysis of other services unrelated to Children Looked After has indicated that a further £0.4m of savings could be made this financial year, an element of this could come from administrative and management savings, however any major contribution will inevitably have an impact on front line services. As from 25th July a spending moratorium has been implemented similar to that which was in force for the last 3 months of the last financial year, any spend over £500 will need to be authorised at Executive Head level and there will be a moratorium on attendance at conferences. All vacancies will be held vacant unless it is considered that none replacement would be detrimental to the management of the caseload backlog in the Children in Need intake team.

7. Bringing Forward 2012/13 Saving Proposals

Where it is possible to do so, a number of proposals put forward in the 2012/13 budget setting exercise will be implemented as soon as possible in this financial year, this is likely to generate savings from February 2012.

5. Revision of the Safeguarding Improvement Plan (SIP)

The Executive Heads for Safeguarding and Wellbeing and Children, Schools and Communities are in the process of revising the SIP; this will include a financial plan incorporating the above actions and should be available for the next monitoring report. The impact of the changes is unlikely to be fully embedded in this financial year but should begin to have an impact in the next financial year, whilst retaining the council within its statutory safeguarding responsibilities.