

CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES RECOVERY PLAN 2011/12 UPDATED FEBRUARY 2012

The revised projected £2.2 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 to some extent by significant under spends elsewhere within Children's services and the use of Sure Start grant, if these are stripped out the overspend would have been £1.3m.

1. Bringing Forward 2012/13 Saving Proposals

Children's, Schools and Families have been set an in-year savings target of £250,000 by bringing forward savings from 2012/13. The savings achieved so far as at October 2011 is £144,000, these are detailed below. This still leaves a gap of £106,000 against this target.

Where it is possible to do so, the 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.

Short to Medium term Plans

2. Vacancy Management

Of the £2.2m 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.

Vacancy Management Savings achieved in 2011/12

£10,000 – achieved within the Disabilities Service (administrative vacancy)
£18,000 – achieved from Early Years (redundancy)
£10,000 – achieved from Early Years (play ranger funded finished)
£20,000 – achievable from Review of Business Support.

3. Disability Services Review

As part of our medium term plans there is a review of the level of and types of service provided to disabled children and their families. A specific area under review is that of Direct Payments; where the family is allocated a sum of money to manage their child's care package.

4. Other Projected Savings elsewhere in Children's Services

Within the net projected overspend of £2.2m other services unrelated to Children Looked After has indicated that a £1.8m of savings is projected to be made this financial year, an element of this has come from administrative and management savings, however any major contribution will inevitably have an impact on front line services. As of week beginning 25 July 2011, 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 has to be authorised at Executive Head level and there will be a moratorium on attendance at conferences. Since December 2011 this moratorium has been extended to restrict all expenditure on non urgent items or services. All vacancies continue to be held vacant unless it is considered that none replacement would be detrimental to the management of the Children in Need intake team and safeguarding.

This regime allows Senior Managers and Executive Heads to review and challenge managers where there are significant financial commitments.

Non Staffing savings achieved so far

£0.601m – achieved across Training and PARIS team budgets –
Commissioning & Performance

£0.872m – achieved in Localities (including YOT, Youth, Children's Centres)

5. Proposed Reshaping of the Safeguarding and Wellbeing Service

The Executive Head for Safeguarding and Wellbeing is in the process of reshaping the Safeguarding and Wellbeing service that will see changes to the teams contained within that service. Implementation is from February 2012. This is supported by an evidence based paper which lays out the pressures on the "intake" team in dealing with the increasing backlog of cases. This has required a reinvestment in staffing, which includes a national recruitment campaign for social workers plus the colocation of social care teams in Tor Hill House.

Proposed Long term Changes

6. Identification of the on going pressures

The number of children that are being brought into the care system is now at unprecedented 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.

7. Business case for the Intensive Family Support Service

This approach delivers intensive support for families with multiple problems achieve lasting benefits; not just for the children involved; their families and those in the local community; but for other local services as well by tackling a whole range of factors. The impact of coordinated intensive support can be fairly immediate and help reduce the often excessive demands these families make on local services through staff time and the financial costs of failing to intervene earlier.

Torbay already has a successful Family intervention project but despite its significant progress, the numbers of children subject to Child Protection Plans and becoming Looked After by the Local Authority is continuing to rise. This is creating enormous pressure on resources and increases the potential for poorer outcomes for children. The transformation of the Family Intervention Project coupled with increased investment of £0.5m in 2011/12 to create an Intensive Family Support Service will ensure that resources are appropriately targeted and build on the growing evidence base of 'what works' for families and delivers efficiency savings for the Local Authority.

This project will be embedded within the new 'community budget/troubled families' approach and an existing post has been modified to create a Head of Family Services, to co-ordinate the work. A grant has been awarded (£75,000 per year for three years) by the Department for Communities and Local Government to support this approach and provide tailored family support.

The estimated savings that can be generated by delivering services in this way can be up to £81,624 per annum/per family, with £40,341 being attributed to the Local Authority itself (based on DFE Family Savings Calculator).

Based on 25 families successfully completing in the first year a £0.5m investment "could" generate reduced costs of £2m; £1m of which "would" directly reduce costs for the LA based upon the DFE Family Savings Calculator.

The Intensive Family Support Service has become fully operational from 1st February. It is estimated that the cost of this team together with additional investment that has been made in social care teams will enable us to respond to children in need at an earlier stage.

8. Access to Resources Panel

New panel arrangements began on 31st January and will take place on a weekly basis to manage both the escalating number of children in care and to prevent additional children coming into the system. This will be implemented in parallel with the intensive family support model and ensure that we provide a full and comprehensive multi-agency support plan for families. It will also be complemented with a new 'prevention panel' in the near future as part of the wider Safeguarding Improvement Plan.

9. Children's Partnership Improvement Plan (CPIP)/Timescales

The Director of Children's Services has revised the Service Improvement Plan and it was approved by the Safeguarding Improvement Board and the Dfe on October 14th 2011, with progress being noted both through the Ofsted Unannounced Inspection in October and a Dfe review in January. 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. This will initiate a remodelling of current structures within Social care, localities and early intervention to enable them to follow a targeted model in support of vulnerable children. In parallel with the internal changes a reshaping of our partnership relationships to generate a more focused and effective multi agency approach to support children and young people will also be developed. The impact of these changes and improvements will be realised in budget setting terms as potential revenue savings/investment in the financial years 2013/14.