

Medium Term Financial Strategy - Children, Education and Communities Directorate

Introduction

1. Children, Education and Communities Directorate in York is highly regarded and high performing. Benchmarking data shows that York are one of the cheapest children's services in the country and currently spend one of the least amounts per capita on looked after children's services in the country.
2. The directorate has effective and appropriate structures in place to deliver statutory responsibilities and also has a range of non statutory services that prevent the need for a greater spend on more expensive specialist services. Social worker caseload sizes are appropriate and there is the correct ratio of social workers to managers to ensure effective case management and professional supervision. Any reduction to these current staffing levels would result in an unacceptable level of risk.
3. There is a small central team that commissions and quality assures school improvement, any reduction of this would present a risk to effectively performing our statutory responsibilities.
4. Children's services budgets are allocated into three categories that broadly describe the focus of the services that each budget funds:
 - Achieving
 - Safer
 - Resilient
5. Communities budgets cover:
 - Sports facilities, libraries, culture and museums provision -
An extensive programme of remodelling services over recent years has led to a wide variety of new forms of service delivery including trust, social enterprise, local authority company and private sector led models. These approaches have yielded significant efficiency savings. York now has high performing services, in some cases nationally renowned, with value for money profiling against nearest

neighbour comparators showing expenditure ranging from average to lowest third

- York Learning -

These services are now funded almost entirely by external grant and user income

- Ward Budgets -

This covers the ward budgets, the Communities and Equalities Team that supports them, and a grant to York Council for Voluntary Services.

Approach to Protecting Priority Areas

6. All areas of the Directorate have been reviewed and certain service areas have been protected. It is envisaged that this will remain the case over the medium term. Protected services include:

- The Education Psychology service, which is the statutory assessment service for SEN children. Growth of £100k is included in the budget for 2018/19.
- There are no savings proposed within children's social care services. Reductions to social care staffing levels have been ruled out as this may place vulnerable children at risk.
- The early intervention fund which provides a range of small grants to voluntary sector organisations who support the Children and Young People Plan priorities
- Investment in the 'Troubled Families' programme that ensures the Council achieves its payment by results target
- Voluntary sector grants have been reviewed to ensure that all funding aligns to the Council's priorities and reductions in grants have already taken place. Funding to organisations such as York CVS and cultural organisations that receive national funding from Arts Council England will remain protected in view of their fit with the Council's priorities and the fact that the Council's funding serves to lever significant additional funding into the city.
- Ward Committee funding will remain unchanged

- The current library services contract runs to March 2019. Explore York have delivered new models of community provision and new income streams during the current contract and the opportunity will be taken through the re-tendering of this service to consider the potential to deliver efficiency savings.

Medium Term Efficiencies and Savings

7. Key approaches to achieving general fund budget reductions within Children, Education and Communities over the next two years will be as follows:

Achieving

8. The Council's early years duties linked to the sufficiency and quality of early years provision are currently delivered by two separate teams; the Childcare strategy team focuses on delivering the Council's statutory duty to ensure sufficient places in early years provision and the Early Years Learning and Welfare team which provides advice and support to early years providers to improve the quality of provision. These teams will be restructured to create a single integrated service to ensure no duplication of work with other areas and will reflect changes to central government policy.
9. A review of Home to School Transport Provision has taken place. Options include withdrawal of some services, further developing independent travel skills where appropriate and provision of more efficient transport options.

Safer

10. Reviewing our placement options and sufficiency will enable us to 'Make York Home' for most of our looked after children, although some initial investment will be required.
11. Capital and revenue investment is required to transform the focus and remit of current short breaks residential provision at The Glen respite care home. A proposal to create a Centre of Excellence for Disabled Children and their families was presented to the Executive on 25th January 2018 and would see the development of this new provision on the site of the closing Windsor House. This facility will provide a range of services to enable disabled children to remain in

their families and in their community, including flexible short break provision and a Family Intervention Rapid Response Team.

Resilient

12. Local Area Teams have been in place since January 2017. During 2017 the Healthy Child Service, incorporating health visitors and school nursing, has become an integral part of Local Area Teams. The new service has made swift progress which has been reported to CEC Scrutiny Committee.

Decisions Required

13. The decisions that are set out in the 2018/19 savings proposals provide the basis for moving forward over the next two years, as the majority of savings themes originated in 2016/17 and 2017/18. Specific reports over the coming months will need to be considered. These will include further consideration of policy in relation to home to school transport.

Risks and Impact Assessment

14. Restructuring of the early years teams requires that the new single service continues to ensure sufficiency and quality of places. There may be new pressures on the childcare market following the extension of free childcare places related to future changes in government policy.
15. There is a risk of challenge via tribunal, external challenge and significant reputational risk around changes to home to school transport provision.
16. Voluntary sector capacity (both organisations and individuals) is essential to deliver the budget reduction in many service areas. If this resource is not available this may lead to a reduction in service provision.
17. It is believed that reduction in funding to external organisations will not affect the service provision as those organisations may continue to operate with a more commercial focus. This may include additional charges to the public.