

4 Year Financial Strategy - Children's Services, Education and Skills

Introduction

1. Children's Services, Education and Skills in York are highly regarded and high performing. Benchmarking data shows that York are one of the cheapest children's services in the country and currently spend the least per capita on looked after children services in the country.
2. The service has effective and appropriate structures in place to deliver our 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. CSES budgets are allocated into three categories that broadly describe the focus of the services that each budget funds:
 - Achieving
 - Safer
 - Resilient

Approach to Protecting Priority Areas

5. All areas of the Directorate have been reviewed and certain service areas have been protected in 2016/17. 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
 - Whilst there are some minor restructure savings proposed within children's social care services, any reductions to social care staffing levels have been ruled out as this may place vulnerable children at risk.

- The early intervention fund provides a range of small grants to voluntary sector organisations who support the Children and Young People Plan priorities
- Investment in 'Troubled Families' programme that ensures the Council achieves its payment by results target

Medium Term Efficiencies and Savings

6. Key approaches to achieving general fund budget reductions over the next four years will be as follows:

Achieving

7. The Childcare strategy team focuses on delivering the Council's statutory duty to ensure sufficient places in early years provision. This service will be restructured to ensure no duplication of work with other areas.
8. A saving from the Connexions service which provides career advice and support for young people aged 13 to 19. Connexions advisor support teams will be deployed within specialist areas including SEN, Leaving Care the, YOT and to support the NEET group and by doing so achieve efficiencies.
9. Remodel the Castlegate service which provides advice and guidance for 16 to 25 year olds. This will include prioritisation of counselling services and removal of duplication of work with other service areas.
10. Savings can be achieved in the early years learning and welfare team which provides support and advice to schools, private and voluntary settings, as schools and other early years providers can commission (and fund) the services they require directly.
11. A review of Home to School Transport Provision will take place. Options may include withdrawal of some services, further developing independent travel skills where appropriate and provision of more efficient transport options.

Safer

12. Supporting the development of local specialist foster carer capacity that will enable us to 'Make York Home' for most of our looked after children, although some initial investment will be required.
13. Capital and revenue investment is required to transform the focus and remit of current short breaks residential provision at The Glen respite care home. This proposal would see development of an alternative provision that provides targeted specialist care for children with the most complex needs to support them in the long term care of their families.
14. To refocus and remodel Children's Centre services, to ensure that impact on improving outcomes for vulnerable children and families is maximised.

Resilient

15. To reconfigure the service arrangements of Children's Trust Unit, merging the Family Information Service with Advice and Early Intervention and a remodelling of the parenting support.

Decisions Required

16. The decisions that are set out in the 2016/17 savings provide the basis for moving forward over the next four years, as the majority of savings themes originate in 2016/17. Specific reports over the coming months will need to be considered. These will include proposals to reshape early help and prevention services for children and young people.

Risks and Impact Assessment

17. Restructuring of the Childcare strategy team requires that the team continue to ensure sufficiency of places. There may be new pressures on the childcare market in September 2017 following the extension of free childcare places.
18. There is a potential risk of gaps in the provision to support the transition to adult life for a small cohort of vulnerable young people, including those who are NEET, due to potential changes in the Connexions and Castlegate Services.

19. There is a risk of challenge via tribunal, external challenge and significant reputational risk around changes to home to school transport provision
20. The merger of the Family Information Service and Early Intervention Service will limit the FIS offer for the City as the increasing early help demands coupled with a reduced team will draw a significant proportion of this resource.
21. The remodelling of Children's Centre services may result in gaps in services for families currently accessing support.