

Meeting Title	Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee
Report Title	Children’s Integrated Services: Implementation of agreed Budget Savings
Meeting Date	11 th September 2024

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Summary of issues:

Providing services for Children and Families is a key statutory responsibility for the local authority and a priority for Nottingham City Council.

As a result of the significant budgetary challenges faced by the Council, all departments were asked to identify savings proposals. The council budget and savings proposals were signed off at Full Council on 3rd March 2024. Included within this are savings commitments within Children’s Services.

These savings are in addition to the major programme of transformation in Children’s Services that was agreed at Executive Board on 22 February 2022. The funding for this programme forms part of the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

This report provides an update on the implementation of the agreed budget savings, delivery plans and summary of progress on each budget savings heading.

Recommendation(s):

1. Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee notes the summary of progress on the budget savings relating to Children’s Integrated Services.

1. Background

- 1.1 Providing services for Children and Families is a key statutory responsibility for the local authority. The Strategic Council Plan sets this out as a priority reflected in outcome Child Friendly City. The plan sets out the vision that:
- 1.2 “Every child in Nottingham will get the best start in life, regardless of their circumstances. We will redesign our services to local children supporting them to thrive academically, emotionally and physically, ensuring equality of opportunity for all.”

- 1.3 The plan notes that the Council will “prioritise our statutory duties which protect the most vulnerable children in our city by acting as corporate parent to children in care and care leavers, and by helping families to overcome difficulties and benefit from early and effective support. We will work in partnership to seek to improve educational attainment in our city. To do this, we will work with schools, businesses and communities to ensure Nottingham is a ‘child-friendly’ city, where the views and needs of children and their parents or carers are actively listened to and embedded across all of our activities. We will transform our services to ensure that our resources are focused on the right things and find new ways to deliver the improvements we need to make across our regulated statutory services. We will also encourage our partners to do the same, to help jointly deliver a step change in the opportunities and life chances for children in Nottingham”.
- 1.4 Consultation on the Children’s Integrated Services proposals ran from 19th December to 2023 to 16th January 2024. On 25th January 2024 a paper was presented to Children’s and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee which set out Children’s Integrated Services budget savings proposals. Following this, proposals progressed to Full Council on 3rd March 2024. At that meeting the budget and savings proposals were agreed and signed off. Included within that were savings commitments within Children’s Services.
- 1.5 This report provides the committee with an update on progress of the savings made to date, the delivery plans and the anticipated savings delivery by the end of the 2024/25 financial year.

2. Current position of Children’s Integrated Services Budget Savings

2.1 Youth Justice Service DP(A)2473:

Remove vacant posts and re-structure of staffing, roles and responsibilities

Delivery plan to achieve savings:

Vacant posts have been removed to make the required savings.

Progress against savings target:

There is ongoing work to finalise the staffing structure, develop a youth hub in conjunction with the Youth service and to align that work with the wider transformation work in Early Help services.

Mitigations: N/A It is anticipated that the savings target will be met

2.2 Youth Service DP(A)2473:

Disposal/closure of the Ridge Adventure Playground and Bulwell Play and Youth Centre with increase targeting of youth services to those young people in most need.

Delivery plan to achieve savings:

The savings for 24/24 have been achieved through the reduction in staffing. The savings for 25/26 are based on the closure of the Ridge and Bulwell Riverside.

Progress against savings target:

The Ridge is scheduled to be delivering sessions until the end of 2024. The council continue to explore opportunities for the use of the Ridge to support the local community.

CAMHS CIC are scheduled to take on the lease cost for Bulwell Riverside enabling the Youth service to make the required savings.

The service is currently working with YJS to increase capacity to deliver targeted interventions.

Mitigations: N/A It is anticipated that the savings target will be met

2.3 Reduction in administrative support DP(A)2477:

Reduction in resources for support work

Delivery plan to achieve savings:

This saving related to disestablishing posts within the innovation and change team providing project support to the operational services. Three of the posts were vacant or were due to become vacant by March 2023. Those posts were not recruited to and have now been deleted. The final post was occupied and that staff member has been supported into an alternative, equal graded post within the council.

Progress against savings target:

Savings proposal on track to be met

Mitigations:

N/A It is anticipated that the savings target will be met as all posts are now vacant and will not be recruited to.

2.4 Children's care placement costs DP(C) 2403:

Reduce costs through commissioning workstreams including negotiation and market sufficiency

Delivery plan to achieve savings:

This project seeks to secure better outcomes for children and associated cost savings through being placed in the right placement at the right time according to their care plan through stepping down to fostering or supported accommodation placements in a timely manner. The project focusses on external placements and includes cost negotiations prior to placement, and panels for the following: high cost, exceptional and unregulated.

Supporting market development and engagement work includes supporting with Ofsted registration, implementation and development of the IFA Partnership Group. Long term commissioning solutions are out of scope in this reporting.

Progress against savings target:

The savings proposal is on track to be met and this is already in delivery.

Mitigations:

N/A It is anticipated that the savings target will be met

2.5 Childrens Transformation

Reduction in the number of child protection and child in need plans

Reduction in the length of child protection and child in need plans

Preventing children coming onto care through an increase in family network placements and supporting families at home services

Achieving permanence out of care through special guardianship orders and reunification

Increasing the recruitment, retention and utilisation of foster carers

Delivery plan to achieve savings:

The transformation programme is an established programme of delivery which has become established practice following a series of workstreams co-designed between Children's Integrates Services staff and the transformation delivery partner, Newton Europe. This is now business as usual and has led to a significant decrease in the number of children with child protection and child in need plans and a reduction of the number of children coming into care. Given the significant savings attached to the programme, sustainability continues to be governed through a steering group, which reports up to a Portfolio board and then on to the divisional leadership team programme board and finally to the Transformation and Change Oversight Board.

Progress against savings target:

On target to overachieve against the savings target.

The programme has been overachieving against its non-cashable savings target and forecast projections are that the programme will achieve £10.6 million savings this year against the savings target of £4 million for this financial year.

Mitigations:

N/A It is anticipated that the savings target will be met

4. Summary

The transformation activity has progressed well. We continue to exceed the identified expectations in terms of reduction of numbers of children in care, children with a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan. However whilst performance is currently exceeding expectations, we recognise there is further work to do to drive our improvement journey.