

## Children's Services – Q1 2023/24

### Summary of progress on Council Priorities, issues arising, and achievements

#### Education

##### **2 year olds who take up a place with an eligible early years provider**

1,520 children aged 2 between 01/04/2020 to 31/03/2021 applied for a funded two year place. Of these 1,251 children were eligible and 989 (78%) accessed a funded place.

##### **Youth Employability contract**

The Youth Employability Service (YES) contract has been re-commissioned following a competitive tendering process. The new contract commences on 1 October 2023. The new contract will focus more on those young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). More targeted and intensive support will be provided for some of our most vulnerable young people. The YES contract includes specialist YES advisors for young people:

- with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- who are Electively Home Educated
- who are with the Youth Justice Service
- who are Looked After Children
- who are Care Leavers

YES advisors will be co-locating within the teams supporting these groups of young people where appropriate.

##### **Alternative Provision Directory**

We launched an [Alternative Provision Directory](#) in Q1. The Directory contains a list of education providers that offer provision for children and young people at school in East Sussex. Schools can use the Directory to commission providers for children who are struggling to engage with a full time school curriculum. The providers on the Directory have successfully tendered against a service specification and have completed a robust compliance and quality assurance process focusing on safeguarding, health and safety, policies, leadership, and curriculum. Schools are starting to use the Directory to commission provision from September.

##### **Inclusion Projects**

To support the development of inclusive practices in mainstream schools for children with SEND we invited groups of schools to apply for funding to pilot new ways of working in their locality. 19 Inclusion Projects were successful and will start delivery in Q2. Across all the projects 164 schools and settings are involved with a total investment of £3.2m from the High Needs Block. The projects focused on:

- improving early identification of SEND
- improving the mainstream offer for children with SEND
- improving parental confidence in the mainstream SEND Offer

##### **Proportion of new Education Health and Care (EHC) Plans issued within 20 weeks**

During Q1 88.2% (120 out of 136) of all new EHC Plans issued including exceptions and 88.9% (120 out of 135) excluding exceptions were issued within statutory timescales.

##### **SEND co-production charter**

We have agreed a SEND co-production charter across Health, Children's Services, Adult Social Care and the Parent Carer Forum. The charter reinforces our partnership work to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

## **Early Help and Social Care**

### **Homefield Cottage**

Ofsted judged Homefield Cottage Children's Home as Outstanding, in all areas in Q1. Inspectors found that 'Children make exceptional progress due to the high standard of care provided by staff.'

### **Care Leaver Graduation Lunch**

On 14 June a special lunch was held for care leavers graduating from higher education. The care leavers had achieved a range of bachelor's and master's degrees.

### **Family Hub Launch**

We now have two Family Hubs open in Hailsham and east Hastings with further Hubs to open over the summer months. Professionals who will offer support from the new Family Hubs will include:

- Midwives
- Health Visitors
- Early Communications Support Workers
- Early Years Practitioners
- Community Engagement Coordinators
- Early Help Key Workers

Sessions will give children and parents the chance to socialise and support their children's needs and development. There will be particular emphasis on providing Start for Life services specifically aimed at parents of children aged 0-2 to support the transition to parenting, infant feeding, perinatal mental health and the home learning environment.

East Sussex is one of 15 authorities awarded trailblazer status. The trailblazer status focuses on parent/infant relationships and perinatal mental health. Trailblazers will become national leaders for the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme and will make the quickest improvement to services and sharing best practice with all local authorities.

### **Collaboration against Child Exploitation event**

The Safeguarding Adolescents From Exploitation and Risk (SAFER) Family Keywork Service held an event on 7 June 2023 to celebrate the work of the Collaboration Against Child Exploitation (CACE) programme. Through the programme, parents/carers of children who have been / or are being exploited can support each other in a safe and facilitated way. Parents and carers involved say the programme is hugely helpful to them providing a platform where they feel empowered to take an active role in ensuring their children are safe from exploitation. Parents and carers described the ongoing support, upon completion of the CACE seven week educative programme, as invaluable, helping them to feel supported in a non-judgemental way and allowing them to connect with other parents and carers with similar lived experiences.

### **Youth Investment Funding for Youth Centres**

We have been successful in securing more than £7 million in funding through the Government's Youth Investment Fund to significantly improve youth centres in Heathfield and Peacehaven by December 2024. Planning permission has been granted with plans to extend, improve accessibility and increase energy efficiency. Contractors have now been appointed. The funding is part of a £300 million commitment by the Government to transform and level up the out-of-school youth sector in levelling up priority areas.

## Get Digital's Young Digital Ambassadors

The first cohort of young Digital Ambassadors for the Get Digital programme have successfully completed their training and co-delivered their first Online Safety and Digital Resilience workshop to foster carers and social work practitioners.

Our young Digital Ambassadors, who include children in care, care leavers and children on the edge of care, play a central role in our programme. This is in addition to our other Digital Ambassadors who are foster carers, supported lodgings providers and social work practitioners. The young Digital Ambassadors:

- keep us current and relevant
- help us develop our training and content for the Digital Hive website where they share their tips and experience about staying safe online

They have created content around cyberbullying, confiscation of tech, how adults can help keep children safe online, avoiding online scams, mental health, exploitation, misogyny, and radicalisation.

## Review of modelling and placements

In June, we started an intensive programme with a specialist consultancy, IMPOWER, who are supporting Children's Services in developing ways to make informed estimates on future numbers and trends in relation to children we care for. They are also helping to review how we can improve the number of available placements for children that best meet their needs (including invest to save proposals), and supporting us to evaluate further mitigations to minimise budget pressures across the system, including achieving better value for money from the commissioning of placements.

## Rate of Children on a Child Protection (CP) Plan (per 10,000 children)

The rate of children with a CP plan (**ref i**) is 62.1 per 10,000 (662 children). Although this is an improvement on the 2022/23 outturn of 64.8 per 10,000 (691 children), it is just above the 2023/24 target of 62 (661 children). This measure remains under close scrutiny with a range of reviews and audits taking place to identify where it is possible to reduce the number of plans safely. The reviews and audits are focused on plans that have either been in place for 18 months plus or plans which are coming up to their second or third review.

## Rate of Looked After Children (LAC) (per 10,000 children)

The rate of LAC (**ref ii**) is 63.5 per 10,000 children (677 children), just above the target of 63.4 (676 children) and an increase on the Q4 2022/23 outturn of 62.3 (664 children). Of the 677 children, 68 are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children. Delays in care proceedings continue to impact on the number of LAC. Q1 has seen an increase in the rate and number of LAC. It is not clear yet whether this is an isolated surge in demand or a change in the overall trend. This will be carefully monitored as there has been a decrease in the number of in-house and agency foster care placements available, and therefore more children are having to be placed in external residential homes at a much higher cost. In addition, the complexity of needs (including mental health and emotional well being concerns and neurodiversity) for a number of our adolescent children means that additional 'wraparound' support packages are required in order to ensure that children are appropriately safeguarded, this is adding a significant budget pressure to the service.

## Participation and strategic partnerships

### Helping schools meet their statutory equality duty

We are investing in a two-year project to develop the skills and confidence of schools and colleges on how to meet their statutory equality duty. The programme will support schools and colleges to develop resources and training. Additional funding has been secured to provide the project. The project will be delivered in partnership with Public Health, the NHS and voluntary sector partners.

## Social prescribing and positive activity programme

We have secured additional funds from the NHS and Homes for Ukraine to develop social prescribing and positive activity programmes for children with mild to moderate mental health and emotional wellbeing issues. Voluntary sector organisations will deliver the project:

- Imago is leading the pilot project in four primary schools
- Sussex Community Development Association will deliver a wellbeing offer for the eligible children of Ukrainian guests

In addition, Primary Care Networks (PCN) and Foundry PCN children and young people's Social Prescribing programmes have been allocated NHS Health Inequalities funds to pay for positive activities for the children who are part of the programmes. We will evaluate the social prescribing projects to highlight lessons learned for future developments in Sussex.

## Revenue Budget Summary

The departments net revenue budget is £117.384m and is projecting an estimated overspend of £15.166m (**ref v**).

The main area of projected overspend is in Early Help and Social Care of £16.424m (**ref iv**). This is being offset by funds held within Central Resources of £1.300m (**ref iii**), this includes £500k of anticipated funding from Public Health and one off in year slippage of £607k from the £1.5m attendance allowance investment.

There was a significant and worrying increase in the number of external residential placements for LAC during Q1; this growth in demand and need for agency wraparound support is projected to remain, contributing £12.7m of budget overspend.

During 2022/23 there were 18 additional children placed in external accommodation. However, in Q1 alone, 26 additional children have required a placement in external accommodation. This equates to an additional £6m of accommodation costs, plus wraparound support costs of £3m. In addition, two clients required secure accommodation, which costs around £750k- £1m per year, and we have lost 14 foster care placements. Overall, there are 21 more children requiring care in Q1 2023/24 than Q4 2022/23. The position includes the use of £4m of COVID-19 funding.

The service is trying to understand the spike in demand. The forecast put forward at this stage is that of maintaining demand as of June with no additional growth in price or demand. The aspiration is to achieve at least that position and potentially reduce the projected overspend total, by reducing use of high-cost external placements and wraparound support, increasing foster carers, stepping young people down and where possible reunifying them with families.

In May the Department engaged the consultancy firm Impower to carry out a detailed review of our strategy for providing high quality, affordable care for looked after children. Impower have worked closely with the service to understand the needs of our looked after children. Using their evidence based "Valuing Care" approach to understanding the needs of children and matching those needs with appropriate provision they have identified potential savings of up to £4m for 2023/24 based on an analysis of a sample from the current cohort of children, by matching needs with the most cost-effective provision. This could increase in future years. Impower have been engaged for a further three-month period to implement and embed the approach they recommend. The aim is to achieve the level of savings estimated to be possible. However, the forecast put forward is one of caution, as the service is experiencing high demand, in common with the national picture and, as reported by the CMA in 2022, the market for care placements nationally is not effective leading to high prices for all councils.

If there continues to be an additional five children per month who must be placed in agency residential care, this will add 45 additional children to the cohort requiring residential care in Q2 – Q4, costing a further £5.6m (£4.1m residential costs £1.5m agency wraparound).

The service has already seen average price increases of 25% in unbudgeted wraparound support and 48% increase in supported accommodation costs. The above additional growth is within the external residential placements with a weekly average cost of £4,111 should this increase by 10% from 1<sup>st</sup> July the cost would be an additional £16k per child covering 9 months to end March 2024. No additional growth for price increase has been projected at this stage. The impact of work with Impower is being monitored closely.

### **Early Help and Social Care**

#### Localities is projecting a £1.6m overspend:

£1.0m is due to spend on staff including agency staff. The parent and baby unit is seeing pressure of £194k, intentionally homeless £191k, and no recourse to public funds £330k. The Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) budget has unfunded costs of £245k. This is being offset by underspends against S17 Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities of £300k which saw an increase in budget in 2022/23.

#### Looked After Children is projecting a £14.2m overspend:

This includes a projected overspend of £1.8m in our children's homes due to additional staffing costs, required mainly in Hazel Lodge (£726k) and Silver Birches (£947k).

LAC management is projecting an overspend due to staffing costs by £143k.

Lansdowne is closed and currently projecting a £826k overspend, £300k of which is due to over invoiced income, the balance being staff and consultant costs, more details are shown below.

LAC is projecting a £1.2m overspend due mainly to an overspend on staffing budgets including Care leavers 18+ (£481k) and care leavers staffing costs (£357k).

Fostering Services is projecting a £466k overspend, mainly due to staff costs of £220k, discretionary payments £80k, reduced income £135k, non-pay £30k. The position includes an 8% increase in allowances paid to foster and kinship carers which was paid above the budgeted 2% to meet in-year national expectations.

The main pressure is External Residential costs of which is projecting an overspend of £12.7m, which is due to growth in demand as described with an additional 26 children and young people requiring residential placements in Q1.

There are projected underspends of £858k on Agency foster carers and £965k on in house foster carers services. This area has seen reduction in care provision by 14 children in Q1, leading to the additional demand in residential provision.

There are also projected underspends in Adoption Services of £324k.

The respite units are projecting an underspend of £747k, with Dorset Road showing £820k underspend but Sorrel Drive projecting an overspend of £230k.

#### Lansdowne is projecting a £826k overspend:

£300k is due to income correction and £526k with some staff costs remaining here along with premises costs and consultant fees. Staff have been re-deployed into other areas supporting delivery and reducing the need for agency staff.

We are planning to recruit and re mobilise staff from October. A lot of staff are required to open and run a secure unit, which increase as occupancy rates increase. Recruitment is underway and a phased approach has been recommended. Current plans to open would see this overspend increase as staff are taken on and trained whilst occupancy rates are gradually increased to four by the end of the year. This could see overspends increase in 2023/24 by between £400k to £900k on top of the current £826k, but the aim is to cover the initial set up costs through higher pricing in the initial months of operating.

## Communication, Planning and Performance

There is a small projected overspend of £22k. The Council's investment in Home to School Transport of £4.0m in 2023/24 has proved to be sufficient to fund the pressure in East Sussex, although the new intake of children in September may differ to that projected. This pressure is being seen across the country.

### Central Resources

There is a projected underspend of £1.3m, which includes £500k from the PH "Healthy Child Partnership" to support early intervention costs. The department received £1.5m investment towards improving attendance allowance. In this financial year pending restructure and recruitment there is an in-year underspend of £607k, which has been set against the overspend.

Contribution of £100k from reserves and £93k from Supported Families.

### Next steps

The service proposes to address the projected LAC overspend primarily through a series of invest to save interventions as recommended by IMPOWER. If these are successful in-year, which is the aim but will be challenging, the overspend could be reduced by up to £4m. The £1.5m pressure in the Locality part of the service cannot be addressed in this way; opportunities to reduce the additional staffing hours currently required for safe Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) operation will be kept under close review.

As noted, as a contribution to mitigating the projected overall overspend it has been agreed that an additional £500,000 of Public Health grant should be allocated to support delivery of the Integrated Healthy Child Programme in 2023/2024, allowing a reduction in CSD spend on targeted early help.

### Capital Programme Summary

The Capital Programme for 2023/24 is a £1.446m projected spend against a budget of £1.215m (ref vi). The additional spend is the Council's contribution towards projects that are funded by the disabled facilities grant managed by the Districts and Boroughs. This will be funded from Capital reserves.

### Performance exceptions (See How to read this report for definition)

#### Priority – Keeping vulnerable people safe

| Performance measure   | Outturn 22/23       | Target 23/24        | RAG Q1 23/24 | RAG Q2 23/24 | RAG Q3 23/24 | RAG Q4 23/24 | Q1 23/24 outturn    | Note ref |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------|----------|
| Rate of children with a Child Protection Plan (per 10,000 children) | 64.8 (691 children) | 62 (661 children)   | A            |              |              |              | 62.1 (662 children) | i        |
| Rate of Looked After Children (per 10,000 children)                 | 62.3 (664 children) | 63.4 (676 children) | A            |              |              |              | 63.5 (677 children) | ii       |

**Savings exceptions 2023/24 (£'000)**

| Service description                            | Original Target For 2023/24 | Target including items c/f from previous year(s) | Achieved in-year | Will be achieved, but in future years | Cannot be achieved | Note ref |
|--|-----------------------------|--|------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|----------|
|  | -                           | -  | -                | -                                     | -                  |          |
|  | -                           | -  | -                | -                                     | -                  |          |
| <b>Total Savings</b>                           | <b>0</b>                    | <b>0</b>   | <b>0</b>         | <b>0</b>                              | <b>0</b>           |          |
|  |                             |  | -                | -                                     | -                  |          |
|  |                             |  | -                | -                                     | -                  |          |
| <b>Subtotal Permanent Changes <sup>1</sup></b> |                             |  | <b>0</b>         | <b>0</b>                              | <b>0</b>           |          |
| <b>Total Savings and Permanent Changes</b>     | <b>0</b>                    | <b>0</b>   | <b>0</b>         | <b>0</b>                              | <b>0</b>           |          |

| Memo: treatment of savings not achieved in the year (£'000) | Temporary Funding <sup>2</sup> | Part of reported variance <sup>3</sup> | Total    | Note Ref |
|---|--------------------------------|--|----------|----------|
|   | -                              | -                                      | -        |          |
|   | -                              | -                                      | -        |          |
|   | -                              | -                                      | -        |          |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>0</b>                       | <b>0</b>                               | <b>0</b> |          |

<sup>1</sup> Where agreed savings are reasonably unable to be achieved other permanent savings are required to be identified and approved via quarterly monitoring.

<sup>2</sup> Temporary funding will only replace a slipped or unachieved saving for one year; the saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

<sup>3</sup> The slipped or unachieved saving will form part of the department's overall variance - it will either increase an overspend or decrease an underspend. The saving will still need to be made in future years (or be replaced with something else).

**Revenue Budget 2023/24 (£'000)**

| Divisions                               | Planned Gross  | Planned Income   | Planned Net    | Projected Gross | Projected Income | Projected Net  | (Over)/<br>under<br>spend<br>Gross | (Over)/<br>under<br>spend<br>Income | (Over)/<br>under<br>spend<br>Net | Note<br>ref |
|---|----------------|------------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Central Resources                       | 2,242          | (1,332)          | 910            | 942             | (1,332)          | (390)          | 1,300                              | -                                   | 1,300                            | iii         |
| Early Help and Social Care              | 97,484         | (16,254)         | 81,230         | 113,891         | (16,237)         | 97,654         | (16,407)                           | (17)                                | (16,424)                         | iv          |
| Education and ISEND                     | 112,546        | (8,177)          | 104,369        | 114,490         | (10,101)         | 104,389        | (1,944)                            | 1,924                               | (20)                             |             |
| Communication, Planning and Performance | 31,389         | (4,340)          | 27,049         | 34,451          | (7,380)          | 27,071         | (3,062)                            | 3,040                               | (22)                             |             |
| DSG non Schools                         | -              | (96,174)         | (96,174)       | -               | (96,174)         | (96,174)       | -                                  | -                                   | -                                |             |
| Schools                                 | 157,625        | (157,625)        | -              | 157,625         | (157,625)        | -              | -                                  | -                                   | -                                |             |
| <b>Total CSD</b>                        | <b>401,286</b> | <b>(283,902)</b> | <b>117,384</b> | <b>421,399</b>  | <b>(288,849)</b> | <b>132,550</b> | <b>(20,113)</b>                    | <b>4,947</b>                        | <b>(15,166)</b>                  | <b>v</b>    |

**Capital programme 2023/24 (£'000)**

| Approved project                                 | Budget:<br>total<br>project<br>all<br>years | Projected:<br>total<br>project<br>all years | Budget<br>Q1 | Actual<br>to<br>date<br>Q1 | Projected<br>2023/24 | Variation<br>(Over) /<br>under<br>Q1<br>budget | Variation<br>analysis:<br>(Over) /<br>under<br>spend | Variation<br>analysis:<br>Slippage<br>to future<br>year | Variation<br>analysis:<br>Spend in<br>advance | Note<br>ref |
|--|---|---|--------------|----------------------------|----------------------|--|--|---|---|-------------|
| House Adaptations for Disabled Children's Carers | 1,090                                       | 1,322                                       | 50           | 20                         | 282                  | (232)  | (232)  | -   | -   |             |
| Schools Delegated Capital                        | 29,673                                      | 29,673                                      | 1,150        | 316                        | 1,150                | -  | -  | -   | -   |             |
| Conquest Centre redevelopment                    | 356   | 356   | 15           | -                          | 15                   | -  | -  | -   | -   |             |
| Youth Investment Fund                            | 193   | 193   | -            | -                          | -                    | -  | -  | -   | -   |             |
| <b>Total CSD</b>                                 | <b>31,312</b>                               | <b>31,544</b>                               | <b>1,215</b> | <b>336</b>                 | <b>1,447</b>         | <b>(232)</b>                                   | <b>(232)</b>   | <b>0</b>  | <b>0</b>                                      | <b>vi</b>   |