

Children & Families Scrutiny Committee

Portfolio: Children, Families & Education

Strategic Intent

To help children grow up healthy, happy, with confidence ambition and surrounded by love, care and kindness. We want all children to have the ‘very best start in life and to thrive throughout their growing up and beyond.’ (Stockport Borough Plan). We will manage increasing demand and cost by focusing on our strong prevention and early help approach so we can meet needs at the earliest opportunity. This will reduce reliance on high cost placements and reduce the demand into higher cost services. To meet these challenges our integrated model “Stockport Family,” which works together across education, health, and care, has never been more important. It is key to responding to and meeting demand.

CP priority	MTFP driver	Directorate and Service area	Proposal summary	Saving 24/25 (£000)	Lead Portfolio
Delivering for those who most need it most. Wellbeing in Neighbourhoods Effective and Efficient Services	Value for Money	Children’s	<p>High-Cost Placements - Internal Sufficiency Programme</p> <p>Ensuring we focus on value for money by having the appropriate levels of internal placements responding to local need.</p>	<p>Nil</p> <p>Proposals are part of the portfolio recovery plan, addressing current overspends and future cost avoidance</p>	Children, Families & Education
Delivering for those who need it most.	Demand Reduction	Children’s	<p>High-Cost Placements - Evidence Based Interventions</p> <p>Increase workforce capacity to provide intensive support to prevent use of high-cost placements to reduce demand and resulting costs.</p>	<p>Nil</p> <p>Proposals are part of the portfolio recovery plan,</p>	Children, Families & Education

CP priority	MTFP driver	Directorate and Service area	Proposal summary	Saving 24/25 (£000)	Lead Portfolio
Wellbeing in neighbourhoods				addressing current overspends and future cost avoidance	
Effective and Efficient Services					
Effective and Efficient Services	Value for Money (Cost Avoidance)	Children's	Housing – 18+ Accommodation Ensuring we have sufficient housing capacity for care leavers.	Nil Proposals are part of the portfolio recovery plan, addressing current overspends and future cost avoidance	Children, Families & Education
Delivering for those who need it most.					
Wellbeing in neighbourhoods					
Effective and Efficient Services	Value for Money	Children's, Integrated Care Board	Health Identification of opportunities for health funding contribution within current packages, and work to support increased contributions ongoing.	Nil Proposals are part of the portfolio recovery plan, addressing current overspends and future cost avoidance	Children, Families & Education
Delivering for those who need it most					

CP priority	MTFP driver	Directorate and Service area	Proposal summary	Saving 24/25 (£000)	Lead Portfolio
Effective and Efficient Services	Value for Money	Children's	<p>SEN Transport</p> <p>A review of SEN Transport practice and policy to ensure value for money and that children are prepared for adulthood.</p>	<p>Nil</p> <p>Proposals are part of the portfolio recovery plan, addressing current overspends and future cost avoidance</p>	Children, Families & Education

High-Cost Placements

Project	High-Cost Placements - Internal Sufficiency Programme
Lead portfolio	Children & Families Scrutiny Committee
Council Plan Priority	Effective and Efficient Services
Senior responsible officer	Jeanette Warburton and James Kington
MTFP Lens	Value for Money
Service	Children's
Proposal summary	<p>Internal Sufficiency Programme</p> <p>Ensuring we focus on value for money by having the appropriate levels of internal placements responding to local need.</p> <p>This business case is to deliver additional residential placements through the Stone Mill terrace proposal. This expansion in capacity is required to meet increasing demand due to rising numbers and complexity of children in care. This provision will be a registered home for 16 + year old young people with outreach provided by Broadfields supported accommodation with a focus to reduce our spend on external placements.</p> <p>Our long-term solution to address sufficiency needs is to develop a strategy to support the expansion of the current stock of children's homes through the acquisition of new properties. This will be done in partnership between estates and asset management and children's services with a clear strategy to ensure we can meet our sufficiency duty locally for our children in care and care leavers - within the wider local housing plan.</p>
How will this proposal avoid costs?	<p>Proposals are part of the portfolio recovery plan, addressing current overspends and future cost avoidance.</p> <p>Through this approach cost of specified packages of support should reduce by increasing the availability of appropriate internal placements.</p>
Any benchmarking information available to compare Stockport with comparable authorities	<p>Despite the recent increase in the number of Looked After Children (rate of 77 per 10,000), Stockport is still one of the lowest in the Northwest (average rate 100 per 10,000), however we are slightly above that of our statistical neighbours (70 per 10,000).</p>
Workforce impact. Outline any changes to the	<p>There will be no changes to staffing because of this proposal.</p>

Project	High-Cost Placements - Internal Sufficiency Programme
workforce as a result of this proposal	
Outline any internal / organisational impact of the proposal	Further exploration on the best use of resources and what is needed for this home is required including impact for the service and new registration requirements.
Outline any risks, changes to service delivery and impact this proposal may have on service users	<p><u>Impact on users</u></p> <p>More internal residential placements will be available in Stockport, reducing the need for children to be placed out of borough at high cost.</p> <p><u>Risks to delivery</u></p> <p>Costs may be incurred if delivery is delayed.</p> <p>Identification and acquisition of suitable properties - property values in Stockport are historically high and it could prove challenging to identify and purchase properties in suitable timescales. This risk will be mitigated through market intelligence and building strong relationships with local agents to ensure, and current downturn in the housing market.</p> <p>Recruitment and retention of staff - there is a shortage of skilled and experienced registered managers and residential support staff, with external residential providers often paying higher wages. This will be mitigated by developing a bespoke recruitment strategy with early engagement with colleagues in HR and OD.</p> <p>New risks may emerge after scheme opens and will be addressed as need arises.</p>
Delivering the change List key milestones and delivery dates (where known)	<p>Cabinet approval on September 23.</p> <p>Establish Programme Plan, Governance and Resource - 3 Months.</p> <p>Agree and implement proposals on a 12 month rolling programme.</p>
Will reserves/ double running be needed in order to deliver this proposal?	Yes.
Is public consultation needed?	No, specific consultation on this proposal is not needed but we will seek views on all our proposals through our overall budget public consultation which runs from 15th November to the 13th December.

Project	High-Cost Placements - Internal Sufficiency Programme
Is a separate EqIA (Equalities impact assessment) needed?	An EqIA will be appropriate and undertaken where proposals have an impact on service delivery.
Is a separate EIA (Environmental impact assessment) needed?	No EIA is required.

Project	High-Cost Placements – Evidence Based interventions
Lead portfolio	Children & Families Scrutiny Committee
Council Plan Priority	Effective and Efficient Services
Senior responsible officer	Rebecca Key
MTFP Lens	Value for Money
Service	Children's
Proposal summary	<p>We have strong evidenced based interventions, such as our Stockport Family First edge of care services, Family Drug and Alcohol Court, COMMA, New Beginnings, and Family Group Conferencing that prevent children coming into care or ensure that when they do their needs are better met for best value for money like fostering and family placements. We know that we can have more impact on demand and reduce entry into care by increasing investment and capacity to upscale these interventions. We require continued investment to save over the next 3 – 5 years.</p> <p>Evidence Based Intervention – Increase intensive support capacity.</p> <p>To increase intensive support capacity to focus on our recovery plan priorities in reducing external placement costs through intensive support work with young people, providers, and families to support children to be with their families or achieve the right plan for the child's permanent care.</p> <p>The focus of the team will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support prevention of children coming into care – increasing Intensive Support Worker (ISW) capacity enables an early support offer for those children edging towards care and those on the edge of care. The

Project	High-Cost Placements – Evidence Based interventions
	<p>ISWs will work closely with social workers and key professionals involved in team around the child meetings offering intense coordinated packages of support-to-support children at home, where it is safe to do so.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted work with children’s social care service leaders to identify young people we could either support to return home or support to reduce placement cost by finding an alternative provision e.g., foster carer or children's home. This will be initially maximum impact areas – those who could return home (under 16), those in high-cost placements and young people aged 16/17yrs with plans for independent living. <p>There will be a review of internal foster care placements for any young people with rehabilitation plans.</p> <p>Clinical deep dive of children under 12s placed in children's homes to inform their care plans and seek opportunities to ready children for family/foster placements where in line with their needs.</p> <p>Each allocated worker will be accountable for reporting on progress and cost savings tracked.</p> <p>There will be robust governance arrangements for scrutiny, oversight and for overcoming any obstacles as well as financial tracking.</p>
How will this proposal avoid costs?	<p>Proposals are part of the portfolio recovery plan, addressing current overspends and future cost avoidance.</p> <p>Children will be agreed with service leaders where this increase in capacity can have the most impact in progressing children's permanence plans which in turn has a positive impact on the Council financially.</p>
Any benchmarking information available to compare Stockport with comparable authorities	<p>According to 22/23 budget spend, Stockport has the lowest spend per capita (£600) vs North West average (£900).</p> <p>The difference in cost per child for a year between internal and external provision is between £0.150m and £0.250m per annum based on difference between external residential and foster; and the difference between external and internal residential.</p>
Workforce impact. Outline any changes to the workforce as a result of this proposal	<p>There will be no changes to staffing because of this proposal.</p>
Outline any internal / organisational impact of the proposal	<p>More intensive support workers and senior practitioner capacity to be able to provide increased capacity to offer wrap around support service for children and young people edging in to care, at the edge of care or in care.</p>

Project	High-Cost Placements – Evidence Based interventions
Outline any risks, changes to service delivery and impact this proposal may have on service users	<p><u>Impact on service user</u></p> <p>The increased intensive support will provide additional capacity to support plans for children to move into cheaper and better quality placements. They will also ensure there isn't drift or delay in the plans for children and ultimately achieve the best outcome for the child.</p> <p><u>Risk to delivery</u></p> <p>Placements being available – placement sufficiency.</p> <p>Increasing external placement costs cannot be controlled.</p> <p>Increased demand in new placements.</p> <p>Recruitment of the team.</p>
<p>Delivering the change</p> <p>List key milestones and delivery dates (where known)</p>	<p>Identify the Young People who require Intensive Support Workers (ISW) with Children's Social Care Service Lead (CSC SL) to agree targets and a cost indications. Input from finance and placements in week 1.</p> <p>Set up governance and panel for operations within 4 weeks.</p> <p>Agree evaluation and tracking procedure to confirm success of increased ISW with regular savings report within 4 weeks.</p> <p>Recruit to ISW and SP roles within 12-16 weeks (from recruitment to start date).</p>
Will reserves/ double running be needed in order to deliver this proposal?	Yes.
Is public consultation needed?	No, specific consultation on this proposal is not needed but we will seek views on all our proposals through our overall budget public consultation which runs from 15th November to the 13th December.
Is a separate EqIA (Equalities impact assessment) needed?	An EqIA will be appropriate and undertaken where proposals have an impact on service delivery.

Project	High-Cost Placements – Evidence Based interventions
Is a separate EIA (Environmental impact assessment) needed?	No EIA is required.

Project	Housing – 18+ Accommodation
Lead portfolio	Children & Families Scrutiny Committee
Council Plan Priority	Effective and Efficient Services
Senior responsible officer	Jeanette Warburton
MTFP Lens	Value for money
Service	Children's
Proposal summary	<p>Housing – Ensuring we have sufficient housing capacity for care leavers and those seeking asylum.</p> <p>This proposal is to increase accommodation options to meet the needs of the increasing numbers of care leavers when they leave care at 18 years so they can move on into suitable accommodation and reduce the resulting financial cost to the Council. Without this action it is likely that deficits would increase.</p> <p>It is proposed that Stockport Homes will develop the new apartments either as Council owned housing within the Housing Revenue Account or as property owned by Stockport Homes. Required need is for access to 30 1-bed flats year on year dependent on needs of young people. This could include a need for supported accommodation like that at Shaw Heath apartments (staff supported for vulnerable young people with complex needs).</p> <p>To address the inevitable shortfalls in capital funding, the Council will need to identify additional capital funding to support the proposed development on a 'gap funding' basis and ensure that there is a flexible approach to allow suitable land/property to be secured quickly once identified.</p> <p><u>Work with private Landlords</u></p>

Project	Housing – 18+ Accommodation
	We will also work with and incentivise private landlords to increase private rented accommodation options for former UASC who have no recourse to public funds and are awaiting Home Office status decisions.
How will this proposal avoid costs?	Proposals are part of the portfolio recovery plan, addressing current overspends and future cost avoidance. Cost avoidance to be achieved by being able to support children leaving care to transition into suitable accommodation.
Any benchmarking information available to compare Stockport with comparable authorities	Stockport has 373 care leavers (252 care leavers aged 18-25yrs and 121 eligible care leavers in care aged 16/17 years). This increase in trend will have a significant impact on the service budget but also on accommodation needs when young people leave care at 18 years old.
Workforce impact. Outline any changes to the workforce as a result of this proposal	There will be no changes to staffing because of this proposal.
Outline any internal / organisational impact of the proposal	<p>The increasing demands of numbers of young people (121 yp aged 16/ 17yrs) due to leave care at 18 years places significant pressures on already overstretched housing provisions needed to meet this rising demand. The children in care data shows an estimated forecasted need for 30 1x bed flats to be available year on year to be accessible for care leavers to prevent extensions to costly commissioned placements post 18 (except for those in an agreed course of education).</p> <p>Within this group of young people, some young people have complex needs and may require more supported accommodation (but do not have needs which meet the criteria for support from adult's social care under Care Act) so a range of accommodation options post to be available as not all children leaving care at 18 years are ready or able to live alone and independently at 18 years.</p> <p>If post 18 accommodation is not available this will place significant financial pressure onto the leaving care budget and on internal and external placements and will have a further significant impact on blocking 16+ beds for children in care to be able to move into at 16 years.</p>
Outline any risks, changes to service delivery and impact this proposal may have on service users	<p><u>Impact on Service Users</u></p> <p>Young People in a commissioned high-cost placement could transition into supported accommodation aged 18.</p> <p><u>Risks to delivery</u></p>

Project	Housing – 18+ Accommodation
	<p>Cost increasing year on year if we do nothing due to yearly growth.</p> <p>Significant risk that if we do nothing then the problem increases sharply if costs of placement increase (sufficiency challenge and cost of placements).</p> <p>Availability of property is a real challenge in Stockport and increasingly so.</p>
<p>Delivering the change</p> <p>List key milestones and delivery dates (where known)</p>	<p>The key milestones are planning permission, building, running parallel with procurement.</p> <p>Timeline 1 Properties / Sites to be identified.</p> <p>Timeline 2 Property to start following corporate approval exp January 2025.</p> <p>Timeline 3 Phased developments for a further 2 properties (<i>properties to be identified to inform timescales</i>).</p>
Will reserves/ double running be needed in order to deliver this proposal?	Yes.
Is public consultation needed?	No, specific consultation on this proposal is not needed but we will seek views on all our proposals through our overall budget public consultation which runs from 15th November to the 13th December.
Is a separate EqIA (Equalities impact assessment) needed?	Yes, an EqIA will be appropriate and undertaken to ensure we understand the impact on residents and communities.
Is a separate EIA (Environmental impact assessment) needed?	Yes, an EIA will be appropriate and undertaken.

Project	Health - Ensuring high-cost placements are funded with appropriate contribution from health
Lead portfolio	Children & Families Scrutiny Committee
Council Plan Priority	Effective and Efficient Services Delivering for those who need it most

Project	Health - Ensuring high-cost placements are funded with appropriate contribution from health
Senior responsible officer	Heidi Shaw
MTFP Lens	Demand Reduction
Service	Children's
Proposal summary	<p>Health</p> <p>Stockport has one of the lowest contributions to residential placements across GM compared to North West average and has recently seen a decrease of 41% in contributions. To ensure the right commissioned packages of care are in place, with the right funding arrangement, we will establish a multi-agency resource panel to ensure a joint and consistent decision-making process for allocating resources to meet the complex care needs of children and young people in a transparent, fair, and equitable manner.</p> <p>We will deliver this proposal by:</p> <p>Establishing a multi-agency resource panel to oversee and agree tripartite funding for complex care packages from education, health, and care partners. (Ensure this is consistent with other GM boroughs).</p> <p>Training service leads and workers on the joint funding protocol to ensure they identify packages which need split funding and require panel decision making in order to avoid missing the opportunity for fair and equitable funding.</p>
How will this proposal avoid costs?	<p>Proposals are part of the portfolio recovery plan, addressing current overspends and future cost avoidance.</p> <p>Contributions to the cost of packages of care help reduce the cost to the Council.</p>
Any benchmarking information available to compare Stockport with comparable authorities	Stockport has one of the lowest contributions to residential placements across GM compared to North West average and has recently seen a decrease of 41% in contributions.
Workforce impact. Outline any changes to the workforce as a result of this proposal	There will be no changes to staffing because of this proposal.
Outline any internal / organisational impact of the proposal	Not applicable.

Project	Health - Ensuring high-cost placements are funded with appropriate contribution from health
<p>Outline any risks, changes to service delivery and impact this proposal may have on service users</p>	<p>The multi-agency resource panel will have key senior decision makers and representation across the partnership.</p> <p>It will ensure there are no gaps in identifying and supporting children and young people when their needs cannot be met by currently commissioned services. Decisions will be made on assessed need and based on the best available evidence, providing clarity regarding funding responsibilities and mean that complex placements are monitored, and quality assured.</p> <p>Guidance will be provided on the criteria and process for referral to the Multi Agency Resource Panel.</p> <p>Ensure that there is a dispute and resolution process in place.</p> <p>Residential placements and high-cost packages of support will be reviewed regularly by the panel, to make sure the outcomes are being delivered and robust achievable plans are in place with an emphasis on step down arrangements being progressed in a timely way, when appropriate.</p>
<p>Delivering the change</p> <p>List key milestones and delivery dates (where known)</p>	<p>Establish a multi-agency resource panel to oversee and agree tripartite funding for complex care packages from education, health, and care partners. (Ensure this is consistent with other GM Boroughs) in the Autumn 2023.</p> <p>Establish training programme for service leads and workers on joint funding protocol and how to refer to the resource panel in the Autumn 2023.</p>
<p>Will reserves/ double running be needed in order to deliver this proposal?</p>	<p>No.</p>
<p>Is public consultation needed?</p>	<p>No, specific consultation on this proposal is not needed but we will seek views on all our proposals through our overall budget public consultation which runs from 15th November to the 13th December.</p>
<p>Is a separate EqIA (Equalities impact assessment) needed?</p>	<p>An EqIA will be appropriate and undertaken where proposals have an impact on service delivery.</p>
<p>Is a separate EIA (Environmental impact assessment) needed?</p>	<p>No EIA is required.</p>

Project	SEN Transport
Lead portfolio	Children & Families Scrutiny Committee
Council Plan Priority	Effective and Efficient Services
Senior responsible officer	Bev Milway
MTFP Lens	Demand Reduction
Service	Childrens- SEN Transport
Proposal summary	<p>Special Educational Need (SEN) Transport</p> <p>SEN transport is a statutory service. Under section 508B and Schedule 35B of the Education Act 1996 local authorities are under a duty to provide free school transport to “eligible children”. Within this context an eligible child is one who cannot be reasonably expected to walk to school on account of their Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) needs. These are linked to the provision of education, health, and care plans (EHCP) which is the statutory plan within which we discharge our educational duties as set out in the Children and Family Act 2014.</p> <p>The SEND transport budgets continue to overspend.</p> <p>The current SEN transport overspend must be seen in the context of SEND overall. In relation to pressures both nationally and in Stockport. In Stockport we have seen in 2022 a 37% rise in EHCP referrals and now maintain over 3,000 EHCP plans (3,046) an 8% rise in year. This rise has been seen across England. The rise in demand has also led to increase in transport expenditure. In 2023 we continue to see high levels of referral at 2022 rates. Therefore, there is no indication that demand is reducing. We propose to review our SEN transport policy alongside other transformation work.</p> <p><u>Reduce future demand, we will do this by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening system focus on early help/maintaining pupils successfully at SEN support to provide a more robust early help offer to meet needs as appropriate. • Ensure we have sufficient local school placements that can meet need - strengthen mainstream inclusion, continue roll out of locality resource provisions and plan local additional special school places particularly in relation to the Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) cohort within borough. This means a reduction in travel for children which is in their best interests but will also result in cost reduction. • Strengthen operational practice in relation to parental preferencing. • Building independent travel training more robustly into children’s EHCPs, better preparing them for independent travel and sustainable modes of transport by the time they transition into their adult life.

Project	SEN Transport
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the use of personal budgets.
How will this proposal avoid costs?	<p>Proposals are part of the portfolio recovery plan, addressing current overspends and future cost avoidance.</p> <p>Cost avoidance strategies are unlikely to yield savings for 24/25 financial year but provide greater certainty that some control and stability can be exerted over the SEN transport budget.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand reduction and/or accelerated capital programme. • Independent Travel Training (ITT). • Personal Budget (PB). <p>Proposals in detail:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is a need for across system practice to be further worked on to ensure all professionals feeding into the SEND processes are on board with early help and support at the earliest opportunity. 2. Sufficiency place planning work to continue in relation to the planning of placements including roll out of further locality resource provisions. This will need to align into capital programmes. 3. Review of our social, emotional and mental health schools offer to be undertaken urgently to review provision and a plan formulated on how we can stem external SEMH placements and associate travel costs. 4. Further strengthen operational practice and data collection. To ensure that in all cases it is specified in the EHCP what the nearest suitable school is for the child. Where this differs from parental preference, the LA ceases to be under a duty to provide travel assistance if parental preference is complied with. This needs to be captured further in data systems. 5. Prioritise and embed independent travel training as early as possible as objectives in the EHCP where appropriate - Travel independence is a key outcome for any young person and will bring benefits into adulthood, travel independence is also a sustainable route to reducing reliance of travel assistance and associated costs. Conversations about travelling independently wherever possible and as appropriate considering the needs of individual children should form part of plan drafting and reviews as early as the start of Key stage 2. Discussions and objectives should focus on setting a trajectory for a specific school or type of provision at the next transition and then objectives to enable/facilitate that. To enable us to specify in plans we need to ensure sufficient capacity within the travel training offer. This will require additional resourcing. There is currently a capacity issue and a waiting list. 6. Increase take-up of Personal Budgets through a new revised offer.
Any benchmarking information available to	<p>The Association of Directors of Children's Services in their Children's services funding pressures, summer 2023, financial pressures within SEND home to school transport costs for the 24/25 budget (CCN, 2022).</p>

Project	SEN Transport
compare Stockport with comparable authorities	
Workforce impact. Outline any changes to the workforce as a result of this proposal	Additional capacity would be needed within the travel training offer.
Outline any internal / organisational impact of the proposal	The offer of ITT will shift from SEN transport team to EHCP team to manage. This will have an impact upon individual workload and needs to be built into team capacity
Outline any risk, changes to service delivery and impact this proposal may have on service users	<p><u>Impact on Service Users</u></p> <p>The roll out of further travel training for young people would be a positive impact as they would then have the benefit of confident independent travelling into adulthood. Parent/carers would need to be in full agreement that this was the most appropriate option for their child.</p> <p>The roll out of incentives for personal budgets would be positive for service users financially and would give them greater choice and flexibility over their transport arrangements.</p> <p>Although already in place the further strengthening of the non-provision of transport to schools of parental preference which is not the nearest viable option will impact on some families. The financial burden of getting the child to and from school is passed on to the family if they make the choice to send their child to the school of their preference.</p> <p><u>Risk to delivery</u></p> <p>There is currently already a saving identified against SEN Transport to be taken in future years. Due to the unforeseen delays in the delivery of the Lisburne rebuild this saving is at risk and will need to be accounted for before any other savings commitments are made.</p> <p>All policy changes must ensure the Local Authority continues to deliver its legal requirements and specific decisions will need to be made as above in discussion with parents including preferencing of schools.</p>
Delivering the change	<p>DBV work is ongoing and is a two year change programme</p> <p>Specifying nearest suitable school in EHCP from the Autumn 2023.</p>

Project	SEN Transport
List key milestones and delivery dates (where known)	Prioritise and embed independent travel from Autumn 2023 if capacity is available.
Will reserves/ double running be needed in order to deliver this proposal?	We would need to look at additional funding for travel assistance training if we decided to implement this option.
Is public consultation needed?	We will seek views on all our proposals through our overall budget public consultation which runs from 15th November to the 13th December. Further targeted engagement and consultation will take place with service users.
Is a separate EqIA (Equalities impact assessment) needed?	Will be considered following stakeholder consultation.
Is a separate EIA (Environmental impact assessment) needed?	Will be considered following stakeholder consultation.