

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	Directorate and Service area	Proposal summary	Saving 25/26 (£000)	Lead Portfolio
Effective and Efficient Services	Stockport Family	<p>Neighbourhood and Prevention – Prevention alongside better specialist treatment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A robust and relentless focus on the recovery programme is critical to bringing the children's budget back in balance and preventing further escalating Children & Young People (CYP) costs seen in other local authorities; • Continuing to hold our nerve on early intervention and prevention 	Cost avoidance	Children, Families & Education
		<p>To ensure this programme continues to deliver it is proposed that there will be no additional savings, other than productivity savings, from the children’s budget whilst bringing the budget back in line.</p>		

CP priority	Directorate and Service area	Proposal summary	Saving 25/26 (£000)	Lead Portfolio
Effective and Efficient Services	Stockport Family	<p>Productivity</p> <p>The delivery of efficient and effective services is at the very heart of everything we do</p> <p>Making sure that we deliver services that are the most efficient and effective they can be, focusing on the right things and doing them in the right way</p> <p>Note that productivity runs across all portfolios.</p>	482	Children, Families & Education
		Total MTFP Savings		482

Project	Stockport Family Recovery Programme
Lead portfolio	Children & Families Scrutiny Committee
Council Plan Priority	Effective and Efficient Services
Senior responsible officer	Chris McLoughlin
Service	Stockport Family
Proposal	<p>To further contain and avoid costs through increased focus on the Stockport Family Recovery programme</p> <p>Work to keep demand upstream and reduce requirement for expensive specialist services and placements through protection and continued development of Stockport Family Early Help and Prevention services</p> <p>1. Enhance the Stockport Family model to keep children in their families and communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stockport Family preventative model has a track record of innovation and success in addressing challenges of demand. Without this approach costs and therefore pressures would be higher than they are currently showing at Q2. • The prevention/recovery model seeks to control demand AND reduce the cost of placements when they do need to happen. • This resulted in c£2m cost avoided for Q2 2024/25. • Despite this there is a significant deficit reported which is the focus of a thorough review of the programme to understand how we can go further and faster on recovery. • We are improving our understanding of factors contributing to this position, but we are clear that the main reason is increasing numbers of children and young people going into external residential care. • A proactive review has begun to explore the way the whole system is working to improve children's outcomes across Children's Services and avoid the need for care. • This builds upon the recovery programme which has seen measurable avoided costs.

Project	Stockport Family Recovery Programme
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The review will look beyond national pressures to see what adjustments to the local system could have a positive effect on the number of children in care drawing on the best of practice locally and elsewhere. • The first piece of work has focused on the care plans of children in external placements and whether these plans can be expedited safely and to improve children’s outcomes <p>2. Protect and further develop Stockport Family Early Help and Prevention services and activity to keep demand upstream and reduce the requirement for expensive specialist services and placements</p> <p>3. Increase our focus on the Stockport Family Recovery programme to keep containing and avoiding costs, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep demand upstream and reduce the requirement for expensive specialist services and placements. E.g. using the Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC) produces savings on proceedings costs and avoided placement costs. A recent cost benefit analysis (CBA) estimated a net saving for Stockport over a standard 5 year CBA period of £67,493 per case. This would indicate reductions in costs, primarily driven by children returning to their parents, for Stockport Council from cases heard in FDAC in 2023/24 accrued over the 5 year period of £675,644 (future cost avoidance) • Manage unprecedented demand which is driving costs up because of both the pandemic and market pressures • Manage the cost of demand which has risen due to inflation and the failure of the market for external placements. E.g. there has been a £0.740m cost reduction already in external placement spend due to both the cost of placements for individual young people reducing or the ending of placements. This has been achieved through several aspects of the recovery plan working together. <p>The recovery programme is driven by the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the number of children coming into care, so that children can stay with their families and communities – focusing on edge of care/flexible support to families/connected persons/family group conferencing and evidence informed interventions with strong analysis of impact. • Ensure children who do come into care are in a placement which meets their needs and is best value for money.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase our internal sufficiency of placements to meet increasing complexity and levels of need. • Have the right joint commissioning with health partners to meet children's health, education and care needs. • Have the right capacity, knowledge and skills within the workforce to meet children's need effectively in a timely way. • Reduce demand across the system by having a strong early help offer to address need at the earliest opportunity. • Maintain our relentless focus on integration, which will be enhanced by the neighbourhoods and prevention programme.
How will this proposal avoid costs?	<p>As part of the Recovery Programme several projects have been progressing to enhance Stockport Family model to keep children in their families and communities with a focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening of children's homes to provide more internal children home places to reduce cost associated with external placements. Placement in our own children's homes as opposed to in external children's homes provision avoids an average of £2,000 a week per child or £0.100m per child per year (based on average external bed price of circa. £5,000 per week less internal bed price of £3,000 per week). A new internally run children's home (The Crescent) opened in September with one placement made in this home so far. • Reviewing the Children with Disabilities service to realise efficiencies in the transition phase from children's provision to adult provision and in the provision of respite care • Delivery of Evidence Based Interventions which bring focused support to support children to remain with their families. For example, investment in Intensive Support Worker teams doing crucial work to reunify children with their families working closely with social workers is having an impact. Of the case closures recorded since April when we started to grow the team (team not at full strength with all 5 new workers in post until September), 6 cases have de-escalated. 4 of these

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	<p>were children previously looked after in internal foster care who are no longer in our care. This has achieved a saving of £0.115m compared to the cost for 24/25 had the children remained in their foster placement to the end of the year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved Recruitment and Retention to ensure we have a stable and experienced workforce and reduce use of agency. • Early Help and Prevention – protection and further development of our prevention and early help offer allowing us to meet need at the earliest opportunity including implementation of the Family Help Service and development of Family Hubs • Review of SEN Transport to identify opportunities for reduced spend <p>Through recovery work over recent years we have dampened the forecast deficit position with the avoidance of costs and prevention of demand.</p> <p>Additionally, the Stockport Family deep dive sessions undertaken this summer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noted the importance of a stable and experienced workforce to effective and efficient delivery for children and families; • Discussed importance of ensuring we have explored extensively our opportunities to disrupt the market and ensure internal sufficiency, in particular recognising the benefits of fostering. Therefore, in addition to the areas of focus listed above, we will also be progressing work to increase the number and retention of foster carers; • Recommended work be done to further identify good practice in the development of internal children’s home delivery to optimise provision of internal placements. <p>We recognise there is more we can do to reduce the cost of demand and are in the process of reviewing and assessing the care plans of the 43 children in external residential care placements, and where possible have identified end dates and step down plans and achieve forecasted cost reductions.</p>

Project	Stockport Family Recovery Programme
Outline any risks or changes to service delivery and impact this proposal may have on service users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of children in care are at an all-time high • External Residential (most expensive) is the fastest rising type of placement within that rise. • Increasing number of young people with complex needs • Increasing number of younger children coming into residential placements • The cost/market in external residential placements • Increasing number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) • Foster care placements at capacity and difficult to recruit new foster carers
Delivering the change List key milestones and delivery dates (where known)	<p>Internal Sufficiency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s Home 1 – Opened September 24 • Children’s Home 2 & 3 – Opening in 2025 <p>18 + Accommodation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensive work to identify sites/properties for supported living - ongoing <p>Intensive Support Workers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted work with Children’s Social Care leaders to agree right support e.g. return home or alternative provision at a reduced cost or 16/17yrs with plans for independent living. • Clinical deep dive of children u12 placed in children's homes to seek opportunities to support children to be ready for family/foster placements where in line with their needs. <p>New Beginnings Cohort 13 –</p> <p>Social Worker recruitment and retention review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed review - August 2024 • Implementation of recommendations – by end March 2025 <p>FDAC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased LAs collaborating in FDAC to include Manchester, Wigan and Bolton – April 24, further scaling up ongoing <p>SEN Transport</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Star chamber – completed September 2024 • Implementation of recommendations <p>Review of Care Plans</p> <p>Sprint 1 and 2 – completed November 2024</p>
Will reserves/ double running be needed in order to deliver this proposal?	Reserves previously agreed
Is public consultation needed?	No
Is a separate EqIA (Equalities impact assessment) needed?	Yes, an EqIA has been undertaken previously on the recovery programme to ensure we understand the impact on residents and communities.
Is a separate EIA (Environmental impact assessment) needed?	<p>No EIA is required.</p> <p>Construction projects will be subject to planning related impact assessments as they develop but the MTFP EIA notes an opportunity to further minimise cost increases whilst also benefitting the health & wellbeing of individuals by embedding consideration of energy efficiency into the planning, design and delivery of the homes.</p>

Project	Productivity (£0.482)
Lead portfolio	Children, families and Education
Council Plan Priority	Effective and Efficient Services
Senior responsible officer	Chris McLoughlin
Service	Children's
Proposal summary	Productivity

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	<p>The delivery of efficient and effective services is at the very heart of everything we do</p> <p>Making sure that we deliver services that are the most efficient and effective they can be, focusing on the right things and doing them in the right way</p> <p>All Directorates and Services across the organisation will make efficiency savings.</p>
<p>How will the saving be achieved</p> <p>25/26</p>	<p>The savings will comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robust corporate governance including vacancy management, service reviews • Grant maximisation and review of grant funding • Review value for money in commissioning
<p>Any benchmarking information available to compare Stockport with comparable authorities</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Workforce impact. Outline any changes to the workforce as a result of this proposal</p>	<p>Natural turn over</p>
<p>Outline any internal / organisational impact of the proposal</p>	<p>To be confirmed as the programme is further scoped</p>
<p>Outline any risks or changes to service delivery and impact this proposal may have on service users</p>	<p>To be confirmed as the programme is further scoped</p>
<p>Delivering the change</p> <p>List key milestones and delivery dates (where known)</p>	

Project	Productivity (£0.482)
Will reserves/ double running be needed in order to deliver this proposal?	No
Is public consultation needed?	No
Is a separate EqIA (Equalities impact assessment) needed?	Where required an EqIA will be undertaken as part of this proposal.
Is a separate EIA (Environmental impact assessment) needed?	Where required an EIA will be undertaken as part of this proposal.