

## **Children First Improvement Plan – Outturn 2020/21**

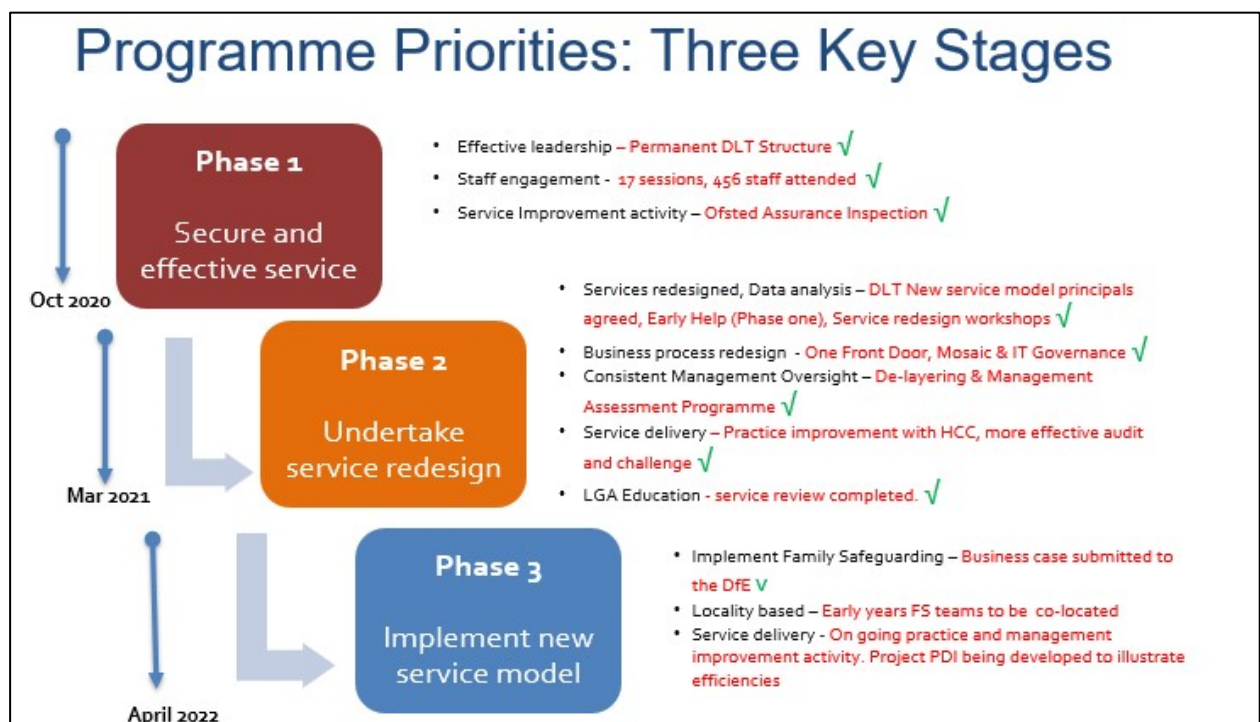
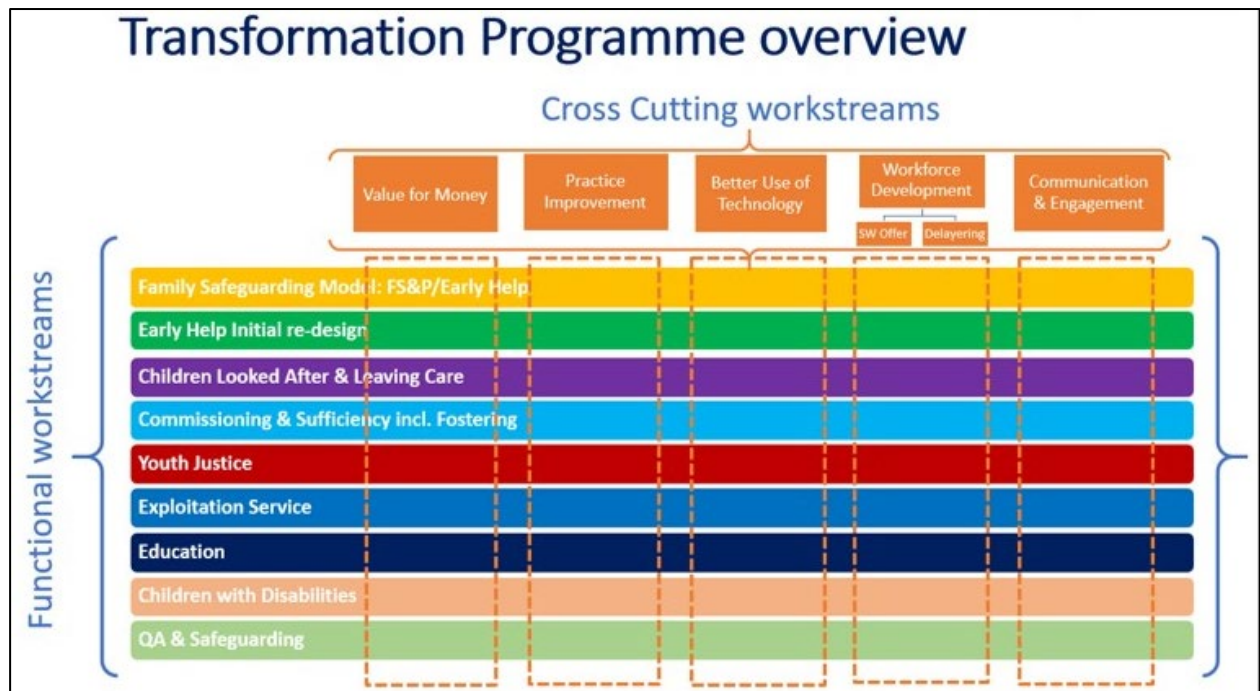
### **2020/21 Overview**

1. The delivery of the Children First Improvement Plan was supported with a combination of both permanent and temporary funding totalling £12.011m in 2020/21. Due to some in-year slippage as a result of the pandemic, £9.452m has been spent, resulting in an underspend of £2.559m.
2. A number of temporary posts have been recruited to, along with a number of projects having started, but both later than planned, and hence from the £2.559m underspend a total of £2.285m is requested to be carried forward in order to fund the commitments already made in 2021/22. Of this £2.285m, £1.5m has already been planned for during budget preparation, with a further £0.5m identified in the December QPM. The remaining £0.274m of the in-year underspend will be returned to the Council's Contingency budget.
3. The funding has continued to support the service to implement the improvements required, which has seen some positive reports both from the DfE-appointed Commissioner and Ofsted. The Ofsted focused visit in October 2020 led to the following statements: –
  - Social workers report a shift in culture and express tentative optimism; there is a sense of ownership and direction. They felt well-supported during the pandemic.
  - Ofsted acknowledged that the service response during the pandemic has been effective and this ensured that children were kept safe.
  - Ofsted could see some progress against the recommendations from the last inspection.
  - There was strength from the corporate approach and multi-agency partnerships during the pandemic, but there is still more to do around key areas of practice.
  - Strengths were highlighted in regard to:
    - school attendance during the pandemic
    - the virtual school
    - the unaccompanied asylum seekers service
    - strong relationships with young people in the leaving care service
4. On 10 December 2020 the Department for Education (DfE) on behalf of the Secretary of State issued a new Statutory Direction stating Children's Services should remain with the Council for at least a further year, with the move to a Children's Trust 'paused'. The new Direction was published alongside a second report by the Commissioner (October 2020) which states that there are 'compelling reasons why a company to deliver children's services functions on behalf of the Council is no longer required'. At the same time, Children's Minister

Vicky Ford wrote to the Leader of the County Council outlining details of the decision. The Minister said: 'I am encouraged that there is now a new political leadership in respect of children's services, supported by strong senior executive appointments, including a new director of children's services. This has undoubtedly been strengthened by the wider work the Council is undertaking to reform the corporate Council, with the support of its corporate improvement partner, East Sussex County Council. The strength of this partnership will evidently be important in creating the conditions in which children's services can continue to improve.' The Minister's letter goes on to refer in positive terms to the Ofsted findings during the Focused Visit as evidence of 'a shift in culture and that the building blocks for improvement are being put in place' and to the effective handling of service delivery throughout the pandemic.

5. However, both the Minister and Ofsted pointed out that there is more work to be done. The Minister stated "it is clear that there is still much work to do to address the weaknesses identified in 2019, and bring the standard of service up to the quality that children and families in West Sussex deserve", and Ofsted highlighted the following points: –
  - The pace of change and improvement needs to increase; at times, the impact on children has not been sufficient.
  - Ofsted saw an improving picture with regards to practice in some areas; however, there are still too many areas of variable practice in:
    - Children with disabilities
    - Management & decision-making
    - Quality of assessments & care planning
    - Quality of records
    - Permanence and pre-proceedings
    - Exploitation & Missing
6. This is why the funding (including that requested to be carried forward) for the Children First Improvement plan for 2021/22 and beyond is a critical dependency for the success of the service improvements that are currently in train.

## Overview of Transformation Programme and High-Level Progress Update



Children First Improvement Fund - Outturn 2020-21

|   | Full Amount Estimated | Latest Full Amount Estimated | Actual spend in 2019/20 | Planned spend for 2020/21 | Actual spend in 2020/21 | Variation to planned spend 2020/21 | Planned spend for 2021/22 | Planned spend for 2022/23 |
|---|-----------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
|   | £000                  | £000                         | £000                    | £000                      | £000                    | £000                               | £000                      | £000                      |
| <b>Temporary investment in targeted improvement</b>                             |                       |                              |                         |                           |                         |                                    |                           |                           |
| Senior Improvement Leads  | 1,160                 | 1,170                        | 446                     | 580                       | 323                     | (257)                              | 401                       | 0                         |
| Programme Management and support  | 1,500                 | 1,300                        | 571                     | 537                       | 697                     | 160                                | 32                        | 0                         |
| Practice Improvement/Behaviour Change Programme                                 | 3,600                 | 980                          | 571                     | 3,016                     | 409                     | (2,607)                            | 0                         | 0                         |
| Leadership Development & Training Programmes                                    | 500                   | 750                          | 0                       | 500                       | 141                     | (359)                              | 609                       | 0                         |
| Specific Project Consultancy  | 1,000                 | 284                          | 31                      | 802                       | 21                      | (781)                              | 232                       | 0                         |
| Communications Lead   | 55                    | 0                            | 0                       | 0                         | 0                       | 0                                  | 0                         | 0                         |
| Complaints Officer  | 75                    | 22                           | 22                      | 0                         | 0                       | 0                                  | 0                         | 0                         |
| Neglect Strategy work   | 64                    | 109                          | 78                      | 0                         | 31                      | 31                                 | 0                         | 0                         |
| Casework Audits   | 0                     | 0                            | 0                       | 0                         | 0                       | 0                                  | 0                         | 0                         |
| Improvement Leads   | 194                   | 727                          | 196                     | 0                         | 351                     | 351                                | 180                       | 0                         |
| Additional Corporate Posts  | 0                     | 155                          | 0                       | 50                        | 79                      | 29                                 | 76                        | 0                         |
| Transition to Children's Trust  | 0                     | 0                            | 0                       | 0                         | 0                       | 0                                  | 0                         | 0                         |
| Extension to PMO supporting improvement work                                    | 0                     | 520                          | 0                       | 0                         | 0                       | 0                                  | 260                       | 260                       |
| Young People's Voice & Participation (new)                                      | 0                     | 78                           | 0                       | 0                         | 59                      | 59                                 | 19                        | 0                         |
|   | <b>8,148</b>          | <b>6,095</b>                 | <b>1,915</b>            | <b>5,485</b>              | <b>2,111</b>            | <b>(3,374)</b>                     | <b>1,809</b>              | <b>260</b>                |
| <b>Temporary additional capacity (service &amp; corporate); retention offer</b> |                       |                              |                         |                           |                         |                                    |                           |                           |
| Retention Payments  | 2,150                 | 2,152                        | 2,152                   | 0                         | 0                       | 0                                  | 0                         | 0                         |
| Additional Service Posts  | 611                   | 4,773                        | 479                     | 130                       | 2,726                   | 2,596                              | 1,568                     | 0                         |
| HR Support  | 188                   | 140                          | 140                     | 0                         | 0                       | 0                                  | 0                         | 0                         |
| Commissioning Support   | 106                   | 94                           | 94                      | 46                        | 0                       | (46)                               | 0                         | 0                         |
| Additional Corporate Posts  | 248                   | 299                          | 161                     | 13                        | 54                      | 41                                 | 84                        | 0                         |
| Admin/Business Support for Social Work Teams                                    | 150                   | 120                          | 0                       | 120                       | 120                     | 0                                  | 0                         | 0                         |
| Leadership Team redesign  | 386                   | 350                          | 157                     | 128                       | 193                     | 65                                 | 0                         | 0                         |
| Mosaic Improvement  |                       | 325                          | 0                       | 53                        | 121                     | 68                                 | 204                       | 0                         |
|   | <b>3,839</b>          | <b>8,253</b>                 | <b>3,183</b>            | <b>490</b>                | <b>3,214</b>            | <b>2,724</b>                       | <b>1,856</b>              | <b>0</b>                  |
| <b>Contingency</b>  | <b>579</b>            | <b>0</b>                     | <b>0</b>                | <b>898</b>                | <b>0</b>                | <b>(898)</b>                       | <b>0</b>                  | <b>0</b>                  |
| <b>Temporary funding requirement</b>  | <b>12,567</b>         | <b>14,349</b>                | <b>5,098</b>            | <b>6,873</b>              | <b>5,325</b>            | <b>(1,548)</b>                     | <b>3,665</b>              | <b>260</b>                |
| <b>Permanent increase in base budget</b>  |                       |                              |                         |                           |                         |                                    |                           |                           |
| Cover for ASYE lower caseloads  | 1,000                 | 1,000                        | 1,220                   | 1,000                     | 1,000                   | 0                                  | 1,000                     | 0                         |
| Review of Social Work Remuneration/Retention                                    | 2,000                 | 2,000                        |                         | 2,000                     | 2,052                   | 52                                 | 2,000                     | 3,000                     |
| Admin/Business Support for Social Work Teams                                    | 700                   | 700                          | 30                      | 700                       | 178                     | (522)                              | 700                       | 700                       |
| Backfill for Social Work Apprentices  | 600                   | 600                          |                         | 30                        | 30                      | 0                                  | 30                        | 30                        |
| Workforce Retention Initiatives (staff parking; pool)                           | 350                   | 350                          | 23                      | 350                       | 300                     | (50)                               | 300                       | 300                       |
| Additional Service Posts  | 337                   | 337                          | 215                     | 309                       | 363                     | 54                                 | 472                       | 472                       |
| Leadership Team redesign  | 151                   | 151                          | 204                     | 204                       | 204                     | 0                                  | 204                       | 204                       |
| Transfer of work to Customer Services   |                       |                              | 0                       | 0                         | 0                       | 0                                  | 145                       | 145                       |
| Additional Corporate Posts  |                       |                              | 0                       | 32                        | 0                       | (32)                               | 0                         | 0                         |
| SLT central support team  |                       | 235                          | 0                       | 0                         | 0                       | 0                                  | 235                       | 235                       |
| Additional Social Work apprentices (new)  |                       |                              | 0                       | 0                         | 0                       | 0                                  | 105                       | 210                       |
|   | <b>5,138</b>          | <b>5,373</b>                 | <b>1,692</b>            | <b>4,625</b>              | <b>4,127</b>            | <b>(498)</b>                       | <b>5,191</b>              | <b>5,296</b>              |
| <b>Contingency</b>  | <b>0</b>              | <b>0</b>                     | <b>0</b>                | <b>513</b>                | <b>0</b>                | <b>(513)</b>                       | <b>182</b>                | <b>77</b>                 |
| <b>Permanent funding requirement</b>  | <b>5,138</b>          | <b>5,373</b>                 | <b>1,692</b>            | <b>5,138</b>              | <b>4,127</b>            | <b>(1,011)</b>                     | <b>5,373</b>              | <b>5,373</b>              |
|   |                       |                              |                         |                           |                         |                                    |                           |                           |
| <b>Totals</b>   | <b>17,705</b>         | <b>19,722</b>                | <b>6,790</b>            | <b>12,011</b>             | <b>9,452</b>            | <b>(2,559)</b>                     | <b>9,038</b>              | <b>5,633</b>              |
| <b>Available funding</b>  |                       |                              |                         | <b>12,011</b>             | <b>12,011</b>           | <b>0</b>                           | <b>6,753</b>              | <b>5,633</b>              |
| <b>Underspending in 2020/21 &amp; Carry Forward Request</b>                     |                       |                              |                         | <b>0</b>                  | <b>(2,559)</b>          | <b>(2,559)</b>                     | <b>2,285</b>              | <b>0</b>                  |

Notes:

1. In 2019/20, the Children's and Young People's Portfolio received £7.2m from reserves towards the Children First Improvement Plan and finished the year with an underspending of £0.410m against the plan.

2. In 2020/21, £12.011m was added to the Children's and Young People's Portfolio base budget; £6.873m on a temporary basis and £5.138m on a permanent basis. The Children First Improvement Plan underspent by £2.559m. Of this in-year underspend, £2.285m has been requested as a carry forward/transfer into the Children First Improvement Reserve to fully fund the remaining outstanding items in 2021/22 and 2022/23. This has resulted in a net £0.274m underspend within the Children's and Young People's Portfolio outturn position in 2020/21.