

## Children First Improvement Plan – June 2020 Update

1. The 2020/21 budget provided £12m of funding; £5.1m base funding and £6.9m temporary funding, to continue to deliver on the Improvement Plan approved by Members in July 2019 and to specifically address the areas of concern resulting from the Ofsted inspection and subsequent Commissioner's report.
2. In April 2020 our new permanent Executive Director for Children's Services, Lucy Butler, joined the Council and is now in the process of establishing her permanent senior leadership team. A successful recruitment process has recently taken place for permanent appointments to Assistant Director posts for Corporate Parenting and Quality Assurance – two of the key areas of focus for the improvement work.
3. The most important task now before us is to create the conditions for a service that we can genuinely call 'Good'. This is demonstrated by three 'pillars':
  - **Pillar 1 - 'What good looks like'**: it is essential for us to set standards of expectation that everyone in the service understands and can measure themselves against.
  - **Pillar 2 - Creating the right Environment**: this includes developing 'the social work offer' – comprising competitive remuneration, the best working environment, a balanced workload, the right equipment, professional techniques and support for staff – in other words making West Sussex a place that naturally attracts the best social work talent.
  - **Pillar 3 - Improved Service Model**: this is how we frame our entire service offer, recognising the need to manage demand and reduce escalation through a preventive approach, always with children and families at the heart of everything we do. This will be a model that recognises the needs of local areas, and in which we will invite our partners to take their full share.
4. One of the underpinning issues to address is strengthening the workforce within the new model. The issues that have been continuously monitored, including the vacancy gap, the contribution of agency workers, and staff caseloads, remain in a broadly satisfactory state. Having achieved this stability, the service redesign for the new model needs to be developed around a set of core principles. One of these is making West Sussex a rewarding place to work in terms of remuneration, high professional standards and organisational efficiency (as set out in Pillar 2 above). The

current retention payment scheme will expire later in the year; permanent and sustainable new arrangements now need to be developed in line with these principles.

5. Notwithstanding the pandemic, a range of improvement activities has continued, including the following:
  - A new Children Looked After and Care Leavers Strategy has been produced in consultation with key stakeholders, including the Corporate Parenting Panel, and is due for formal adoption this month. This is very welcome, since it makes a clear promise that those cared for by the authority will have the same expectations as any other child would have, of being involved in decisions about their care, of support to be happy and healthy, of receiving advice, and full access to education and training in readiness for the adult world. Alongside this we are strengthening our practical service offer to support care leavers.
  - Our Improvement Board and Partnership have continued to meet virtually as planned, giving continued oversight of the improvement process. The Partner in Practice work with Hampshire has progressed and is yielding sound results in terms of tightening standards through the auditing of casework.
  - A programme of continued staff-training and development has now been organised on a virtual basis.
6. In relation to the development of the Children's Trust, the Department for Education has confirmed that there will be a three-month delay in the timetable, hence work will recommence in August to work on Memorandum of Understanding which will be considered at Cabinet in October 2020.
7. Overall, the improvement fund is currently projected to be fully spent by the end of the financial year. With the appointment of the permanent Executive Director for Children's Services, the allocation of funding to specific lines within the plan has been reviewed and revised. The main area of change relates to reducing the consultancy spend on 'Targeted Improvement Funding For Practice Improvement/ Behaviour Change Programme' and instead using this investment to employ experienced agency staff into social worker teams to work within the practice setting to improve practice and change behaviour within key areas. It is important to note that the funding is still being used for its intended purpose; however the delivery of this activity is being enacted with experienced agency staff working in practice rather than consultancy staff.

8. In addition, a request for further funding for IT system changes and improvements to enable a single view of the child will be included as part of the budget process for 2021/22.

Children First Resource Plan - June 2020

	Revised Full Amount Estimated	Actual spend in 2019/20	Planned spending plan for 2020/21	Projected spend for 2021/22	Variation to revised spending plan 2020/21	Spending Plan for 2021/22
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
<b>Temporary investment in targeted improvement</b>						
Senior Improvement Leads	669	446	580	223	357	-
Programme Management and support	1,129	571	537	558	21	-
Practice Improvement/Behaviour Change Programme	1,251	571	3,016	680	2,336	-
Leadership Development Programme	500	-	500	500	-	-
Specific Project Consultancy	31	31	802	-	802	-
Communications Lead	-	-	-	-	-	-
Complaints Officer	22	22	-	-	-	-
Neglect Strategy work	112	78	-	34	34	-
Casework Audits	-	-	-	-	-	-
Improvement Leads	397	196	-	201	201	-
Additional Corporate Posts	95	-	50	95	45	-
Estimate for IT Systems improvements	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transition to Childrens Trust	429	-	-	429	429	-
	<b>4,635</b>	<b>1,915</b>	<b>5,485</b>	<b>2,720</b>	<b>2,765</b>	
<b>Temporary additional capacity (service &amp; corporate); retention offer</b>						
Retention Payments	2,152	2,152	-	-	-	-
Additional Service Posts	3,392	479	130	2,913	2,783	-
HR Support	140	140	-	-	-	-
Commissioning Support	136	94	46	42	4	-
Additional Corporate Posts	264	161	13	103	90	-
Admin/Business Support for Social Work Teams	120	-	120	120	-	-
Leadership Team redesign	314	157	128	157	29	-
Mosaic Improvement	132	-	53	132	79	-
	<b>6,650</b>	<b>3,183</b>	<b>490</b>	<b>3,467</b>	<b>2,977</b>	
<b>Contingency</b>	<b>686</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>898</b>	<b>686</b>	<b>212</b>	
<b>Temporary funding requirement</b>	<b>11,972</b>	<b>5,098</b>	<b>6,873</b>	<b>6,873</b>	<b>-</b>	
<b>Permanent increase in base budget</b>						
Cover for ASYE lower caseloads	1,000	1,220	1,000	1,000	-	1,000
Review of Social Work Remuneration/Retention	2,000	-	2,000	2,000	-	2,000
Admin/Business Support for Social Work Teams	700	30	700	700	-	700
Backfill for Social Work Apprentices	600	-	30	30	-	30
Workforce Retention Initiatives (staff parking; pool)	350	23	350	350	-	350
Additional Service Posts	337	215	309	309	-	309
Leadership Team redesign	151	204	204	204	-	204
Additional Corporate Posts	-	-	32	32	-	32
	<b>5,138</b>	<b>1,692</b>	<b>4,625</b>	<b>4,625</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>4,625</b>
<b>Contingency</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>513</b>	<b>513</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>513</b>
<b>Permanent funding requirement</b>	<b>5,138</b>	<b>1,692</b>	<b>5,138</b>	<b>5,138</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>5,138</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>17,110</b>	<b>6,790</b>	<b>12,011</b>	<b>12,011</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>5,138</b>
<b>Available funding</b>			<b>12,011</b>	<b>12,011</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>5,138</b>

In 2019/20, £6.790m of funding was allocated and spent on the Children's Improvement Programme; £0.595m less than originally allocated. The unspent £0.595m was returned to the 2019/20 contingency budget.

In 2020/21, County Council agreed £12.011m of funding for the Improvement Plan. £5.138m is permanent funding which is within the base budget allocation for the portfolio and £6.873m of temporary funding for this financial year.