

Children and Young People Portfolio – Summary

Performance Summary

1. The Portfolio has a number of performance highlights to report this quarter:

- The planned service changes within Early Help and Children's Social Care have been progressed and are now moving into the implementation phase. The new Early Help service provision went live in January 2022. The first phase of the Family Safeguarding model of children's social work will also be implemented as planned in February 2022.
- In preparation for these service changes, we have seen a review and improvement in the threshold management within the serve resulting in a reduction and stabilising of demand in terms of child protection and children in care plans.
- Workforce development activity has been implemented - including the new social work offer and de-layering of management and the overall staffing picture for statutory social care remains positive. This has resulted in levels of service remaining strong and largely unaffected by Covid absences during Q3.
- The improved quality assurance and performance frameworks have resulted in improved compliance and quality assurance evidence as part of our ongoing commitment to practice improvement.
- We have maintained progress and planning for improving our Fostering Service. Phase two of the planned improvements are on track implementation in early 2022.
- The review of the commissioning management and governance has now been completed and the new management arrangement to align the service with the new Children and Young People and Learning structure have taken place.
- Further progress has been made on the integration of electronic recording systems which is a major programme of activity for 2022/23. The procurement process to award a contract to a partner for implementation is being completed to plan. The contract will be awarded by early February 2022 with work starting in April 2022.

Our Council Performance Measures

Children & Young People		2021/22 Target	Performance Over The Last 3 Periods			DoT	Performance Analysis	Actions	Year End Forecast
			Jun-21	Sep-21	Dec-21				
1	Percentage of re-referrals to Children's Social Care within 12 months of the previous referral Reporting Frequency: Quarterly	23.0%	18.9%	29.6%	19.9%	↗	This performance figure remains within a range which is not of concern. There will always be a level of fluctuation within this area but will remain under scrutiny to ensure if there are any significant increases there will be focus on any practice concerns.	No further actions currently required.	G
2	Percentage of Early Help Plans closed with outcomes met Reporting Frequency: Quarterly	72.0%	67.8%	67.7%	68.1%	↗	Just below target but remaining at a similar level as seen most of 2021. There is some impact arising from plans opened in error including where families have moved or have withdrawn consent. These errors increased slightly following the move to the Integrated Front Door and results in the data showing a slightly more negative position than is the case.	To reduce the opened in error and consent withdrawn the new model puts greater alignment with the IFD Early Help teams and the hub by allocating an IFD Senior Practitioner to each hub, who will work more closely together to review incoming work. Service managers will also be reviewing families where consent is withdrawn to ensure that workers are engaging with families right from the start.	A
7	Stability of children looked after placements - (3 or more placements during the year) - WSCC position in national stability index Reporting Frequency: Quarterly	10.0%	11.0%	11.2%	9.8%	↗	This measure has declined as a total and as a proportion as we are continuing to embed good practice around effective placement planning meetings which are now recorded in a mandatory manner. Further improvement is planned with the Entry to Care Panel confirmed to start in January.	No further actions currently required.	G
8	Support for care leavers to achieve their aspirations - percentage of care-leavers aged 19-21 who are in Employment, Education or Training Reporting Frequency: Quarterly	64%	54%	54%	53%	↘	This is a current area of focus, and it was agreed in January 2022 that as part of our Journey to Independence sub-group of the Corporate Parenting Panel we will be setting up an education and training task group to work on a clear pathway for supporting 18+ care leavers either to continue on with or newly access education or employment.	We are currently undertaking joint work with job centres to get a worker in each job centre who will be a link for care leavers, and our new service specification for supported accommodation will also feature clearer expectation in respect of provider supporting independence skills including job-seeking. We are also trying to front load this work and have instituted a specific 16+ Personal Education Plan process with a focus on transition to adulthood, of which 100% were completed last term.	A
9	Positive outcomes on child protection in 12 months - percentage of Child Protection Plans that result in 'step-down' within 12 months Reporting Frequency: Quarterly	80.0%	47.2%	66.4%	55.3%	↘	The number of children subject to child protection plans has reduced to 717 children, this is over 25% less than December 2020. The length of time children are subject to Child Protection plans has also reduced. 87% of children subject to child protection plans have now been on a plan for 12 months or less. 8% 12-18 months 3% 18-24 months and 1.67% over 2 years.	We are continually improving the efficacy of our child protection planning. We are delivering outcome focus training and motivational interviewing to our practitioners as a way of engaging and motivating families. We have restructured the conferencing and reviewing service. We now have a permanent Head of Service, Service Managers and conferencing and reviewing officers.	R

[Website link to Our Council Performance Measures here.](#)

Finance Summary

Portfolio in Year Pressures and Mitigations

Pressures	(£m)	Mitigations and Underspending	(£m)	Year end budget variation (£m)
Covid-19 pandemic forecast expenditure/ allocations to third parties	£0.146m	Assumed funding from Covid-19 grant	(£0.146m)	
Placement costs for mainstream children	£2.085m	Anticipated cost avoidance once in-house disability & non-disability residential homes reopen	(£0.390m)	
Placement costs for children with disabilities	£1.330m	In-house residential staffing underspend	(£1.070m)	
Spend on vulnerable children and families under S17 Children's Act 1989 Children In Need	£2.500m	Additional grant income in relation to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children	(£0.550m)	
2020/21 & 2021/22 savings at significant risk	£0.256m	Social Care staffing underspend	(£1.065m)	
		Children first Improvement Fund underspend	(£0.100m)	
		Early Help staffing underspend	(£1.010m)	
		Reduction in Intentionally Homeless casework	(£1.106m)	
		In year underspending from homeworking/ change in service delivery due to pandemic restrictions	(£0.260m)	
		Other minor variations	(£0.120m)	
Children and Young People Portfolio - Total	£6.317m		(£5.817m)	£0.500m

Key Financial Issues and Risks Arising

Key Financial Issues and Risks Arising	Narrative	Cost Driver	Baseline	Q1	Q2	Q3	Action	Trajectory
1 Placement Mix of Children We Care For (CWCF)	Despite the overall number of Children We Care For being lower than forecast, there are more children than budgeted for in more costly externally provided placements than those provided internally which cost less. This is leading to a pressure on the placement budgets. Baseline shows the % upon which the budget was set.	% mainstream children in external residential placements	10.4%	12.4% ↗	10.3% ↘	12.9% ↗	Despite improvements in the purchasing mix of placements for Children We Care For during Q2, this has not been sustained during Q3. Whilst overall numbers of CWCF have reduced, the proportion placed in external residential placements has increased leading to pressure on the budget. In addition, the re-opened internal residential homes have not been populated as quickly as expected, meaning the cost avoidance expected has not materialised.	↗
		% mainstream children in external foster care placements	25.5%	28.6% ↗	28.1% ↘	28.6% ↗		
		% mainstream children in internal foster care placements	30.3%	28.3% ↗	28.1% ↘	28.5% ↔		

Financial Narrative on the Portfolio's Position

2. The budget position as at the end of December continues to project a £0.5m overspend, however there have been a number of movements within individual budget areas. The main movements are described below:

- Mainstream placement costs.** The overspend on these budgets has increased by £1.3m since September. The main issue is that although overall numbers of Children We Care For (CWCF) have been reducing, the number placed in external residential (one of the most expensive placement types) has increased by 14 between the end of September 2021 and the end of December 2021. In addition, two children who are currently placed in a Secure Unit have had their placements extended by Court beyond the previously profiled end date at a cost of £0.016m per week which is adding £0.2m to the year end projection. The majority of the reduction in CWCF numbers have either come from placements where there is nil cost to the Council (- eight placed with parents); or from less costly placement types such as kinship (-25).

In addition to this, delays in registration by the regulator (Ofsted) has meant that increasing the occupancy of the newly reopened mainstream children's homes (Blue Cove and Breakwater) has been slower than previously estimated, leading to a reduction in the amount of cost avoidance expected. A further £0.310m of cost avoidance is still expected to be achieved in this financial year based on six vacant placements; however, there is a risk that this will not be achieved and the overspend will increase further still.

- Children with disabilities placement costs.** The projected overspend has increased by £0.190m since September. Pressure remains as a result of a small number of young people with high needs or in a period of

crisis. The pressure is exacerbated by the fact that the opening of Brightstar (an in-house residential home for Children with Disabilities) was delayed due to regulatory issues and this has resulted in the home not being populated as quickly as anticipated, leading to the cost avoidance generation being delayed.

£0.080m of cost avoidance is still expected to be achieved from the remaining two vacant placements – however this is dependent on children being placed at Brightstar in line with the projection. If this fails to be the case, then there is potential for further overspending within the external placement's budgets before the end of the year. Senior managers are monitoring this situation closely.

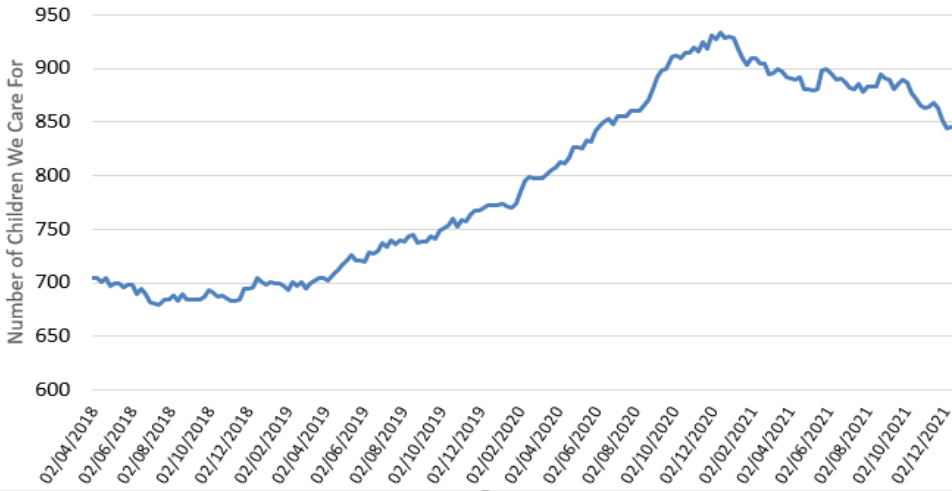
- **Friends and family fostering allowances legal compliance.** A review of the policy relating to kinship care payments has now been completed, resulting in a new policy being drafted for implementation in 2022/23. This means that there is no financial impact for this financial year, resulting in the £0.500m pressure being removed from the projection.
- **Spend on vulnerable children and families under Section 17 Children Act 1989 Children in Need.** A team within Children's Services tasked to look into this issue have completed the discovery phase of work. This has identified that the majority of expenditure has actually been in relation to non-placement costs for Children We Care For. However, this expenditure is also not budgeted for so the overspend remains. Despite work being undertaken to reduce the spend, the projection has increased by £0.150m this quarter, primarily due to increased spending within the disabilities teams.
- **Saving at significant risk.** There has been no change to the savings performance since September. The £0.256m of savings which remain undeliverable have been removed for the proposed budget for 2022/23.
- **Cost avoidance from in-house residential reopening.** Due to the regulatory delays in placing children in the reopened homes, the level of cost avoidance which was previously anticipated has not transpired. The remaining cost avoidance for 2021/22 is estimated to be £0.390m, however this is at risk if placements are not made as per the profiled dates. It should be noted that this cost avoidance will only mitigate the overspend projected on external placement budgets if children who are currently accommodated in external placements move into in-house homes, or if external placements are not repopulated when children leave them.
- **In-house residential staffing underspend.** Due to the regulatory delays in reopening the homes, recruitment to the new operating model for the residential service has not happened as quickly as initially forecast which has resulted in a reduction in the projected staffing costs.
- **Additional income in relation to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC).** The current forecast includes £0.550m more grant income than budgeted for, a small reduction of £0.050m when compared to September. The additional income projected is partly due to the actual income for 2020/21 being £0.3m more than accounted for in that year, as well as increases in the rate of grant received from the Home

Office for over-18-year old's (from £240 per week to £270 per week) announced in July 2021.

- **Social care staffing.** The level of underspending on social care staffing has increased by £0.350m since September. The vacancy gap at the beginning of April 2021 was 2.6%, whereas at the end of September this had increased to 5.5%. This figure has increased further still to stand at 7.2% at the end of December 2021, reflecting difficulties in filling vacancies with agency staff in particular. This is both a regional and national challenge, and work continues to develop and refine recruitment and retention strategies to fill all vacancies with employed staff in the longer term.
- **Children First Improvement Fund underspend.** The Improvement Fund is now expected to underspend by £0.1m due to permanent apprentice posts not being filled until the summer.
- **Early Help.** The new Early Help service was implemented on 1st January 2022 and now that staffing restructures have been implemented, a more accurate projection can be forecast. Given the number of posts in the old structure which have remained vacant for some time, as well as some posts in the new structure which have not yet been filled, and in addition some supporting families grant which will not be spent before year end, the outlook for the Early Help budget is for underspending of just over £1m; a £0.760m increase in the underspending declared in September.
- **Intentionally Homeless.** The intentionally homeless budget is projected to underspend by just over £1.1m, an increase in the expected underspend of £0.256m since September. The projection is now based on the average expenditure and income for the year to date and projected forward for the remainder of the year.
- **In-year underspending from homeworking/ change in service delivery due to pandemic restrictions.** As a result of the Covid-19 restrictions in place during 2021/22, an estimated £0.260m of underspend has been realised following a reduction in staff mileage, home working and changes to working arrangements.

Cost Drivers Information

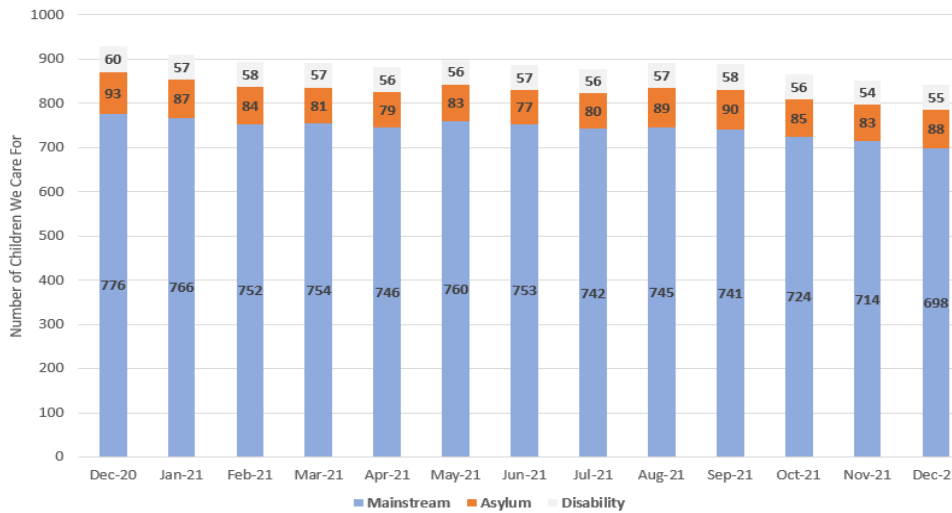
Children We Care For - Trend



This graph shows the total number of Children We Care For Placements since April 2018.

At the end of December 2021, Children We Care For numbers were 51 less than in the last week of March 2021 and now stand at 841. This compares with 929 at the same point last financial year.

Children We Care For Volumes - Rolling 12 Months



This graph shows the total number of Children We Care For placements by:

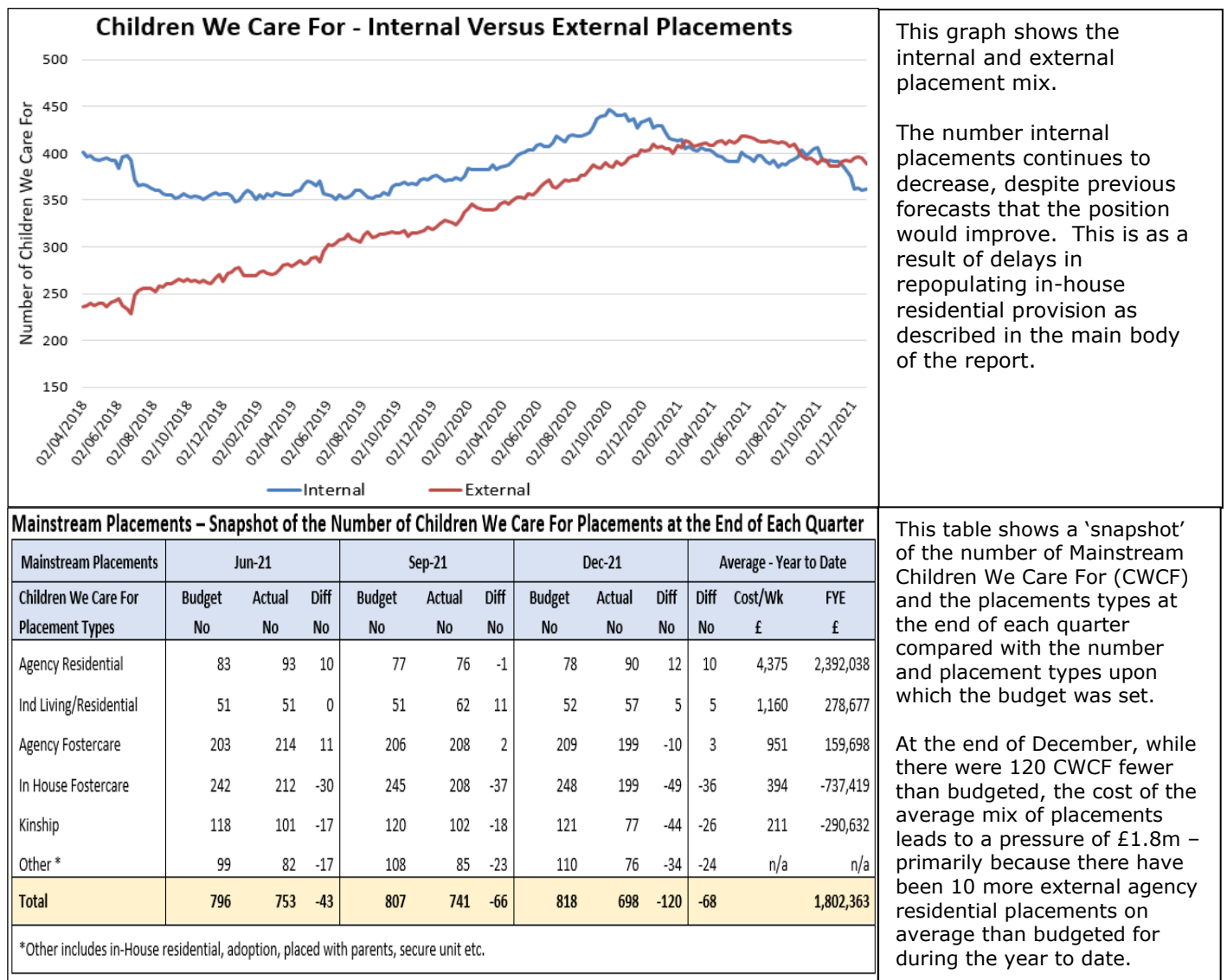
- mainstream placements
- asylum seeking children and,
- children with learning disabilities.

Number of Children We Care For - Actual Versus Projected



This graph shows the number of Children We Care For placements compared to the budgeted expectation.

The graph depicts that growth in numbers has not transpired as expected, however the shift in placement mix has led to the projected overspend begin currently reported.



This graph shows the internal and external placement mix.

The number internal placements continues to decrease, despite previous forecasts that the position would improve. This is as a result of delays in repopulating in-house residential provision as described in the main body of the report.

This table shows a 'snapshot' of the number of Mainstream Children We Care For (CWCF) and the placements types at the end of each quarter compared with the number and placement types upon which the budget was set.

At the end of December, while there were 120 CWCF fewer than budgeted, the cost of the average mix of placements leads to a pressure of £1.8m – primarily because there have been 10 more external agency residential placements on average than budgeted for during the year to date.

Savings Delivery Update

- The portfolio has a number of 2021/22 savings included within the budget and one saving outstanding from the 2020/21 financial year. Details of these savings are included in the table below:

Saving Activity	2020/21 Savings £000	December 2021		Narrative	2022/23
Lease of vacant properties to reduce intentionally homeless costs	150	44	G	£0.044m is the full year effect of one family who were accommodated under this scheme in 2020/21, plus the estimated in year saving from one further family moving from bed and breakfast accommodation into the second property.	G
		56	R	The roll out of the project was delayed due to the pandemic. Since this time, Homes England have advised that they will no longer be making grants to the Empty Homes Programme. Without the capital funding, the scheme is not financially viable for YMCA – Downslink or for WSCC. This £0.056m pressure has been addressed during the 2022/23 budget creation process.	N/A

Saving Activity	2021/22 Savings £000	December 2021		Narrative	2022/23
National House Project	250	250	G	Savings are profiled to be delivered in Q4 and the Local House project is currently on track.	G
Increase in Council's top slice of Early Years DSG to compensate for lost Central DSG grant funding used for wider benefit of children and young people	225	225	B		B
In-house residential programme – reduced independent placement costs	200	200	G	Remaining cost avoidance arising from new operating model, after re-investment in the residential service. Saving is dependent on the re-opened homes achieving the average occupancy levels for the types of children and their associated costs as identified in the original modelling. Delays in re-opening Breakwater (formerly Seaside) and Blue Cove (formerly May House) mean that the permanent delivery of this saving will not now be possible until 2022/23. The saving can be mitigated in year however, through underspending within the residential staffing budget given the delayed timescale for reopening.	G
Reduce the number of solo placements and retainers	100	100	B	This saving has been achieved and is expected to continue to deliver further savings in year, which will provide in-year mitigation for other savings lines which otherwise would be rated as red or amber.	B
Improved commissioning for children's social care service - 16+ step down	1,800	450	B	This saving has already been achieved. This initiative is expected to continue to deliver further savings in year and hence is providing some mitigation for other commissioning savings which are currently rated as red or amber.	B
Improved commissioning for children's social care service - 16+ recommissioning		100	G		G
Improved commissioning for children's social care service - improved joint commissioning		400	G	Achievement of this saving is dependent on an increased number of children with disability receiving Continuing Health Care contributions towards the cost of their services. Q2 recharges have now been agreed and do indicate an improvement in the position, however it is still highly unlikely that this saving will be delivered in full in 2021/22. It can however be mitigated for this year only through other commissioning initiatives which are over-performing. This saving will remain an amber pressure in the 2022/23 budget until such time as clarity can be brought about its achievability, in discussion with Health Partners.	A
Improved commissioning for children's social care service - reducing existing placement costs		650	G	This initiative is now on track to deliver a revised sum of £0.650m this financial year, with the remaining £0.050m having been moved to the 16+ step down savings line - more accurately reflecting how the savings are being delivered.	G

Saving Activity	2021/22 Savings £000	December 2021		Narrative	2022/23
Improved commissioning for children's social care service - U16 step down to fostering		200	G	This initiative is now on track to deliver a revised sum of £0.650m this financial year, with the remaining £0.050m having been moved to the 16+ step down savings line - more accurately reflecting how the savings are being delivered.	G
Early help restructure (year 2 savings)	550	450	G	The decision to proceed with the Early Help redesign has been taken. The increase in the number of delivery points means that the cost of the new service will be £0.200m more than previously modelled, leading to a shortfall in savings. £0.100m of that shortfall is expected to be seen in 2021/22, with the remaining shortfall in 2022/23. This pressure has been addressed during the 2022/23 budget creation process.	G
		100	R		N/A
Lease of vacant properties to reduce intentionally homeless costs	100	100	R	Year two savings relating to a project to lease vacant WSCC properties to YMCA to enable accommodation for intentionally homeless families. However, the withdrawal of available grant funding by Homes England means that the project is no longer viable, and savings will not be delivered. This pressure has been addressed during the 2022/23 budget creation process.	N/A
Increased grant funding towards support for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children	450	450	B		B
Review of agency staff	231	231	G		G

Savings Key:

R Significant Risk **A** At Risk **G** On Track **B** Delivered

Capital Programme

Performance Summary - Capital

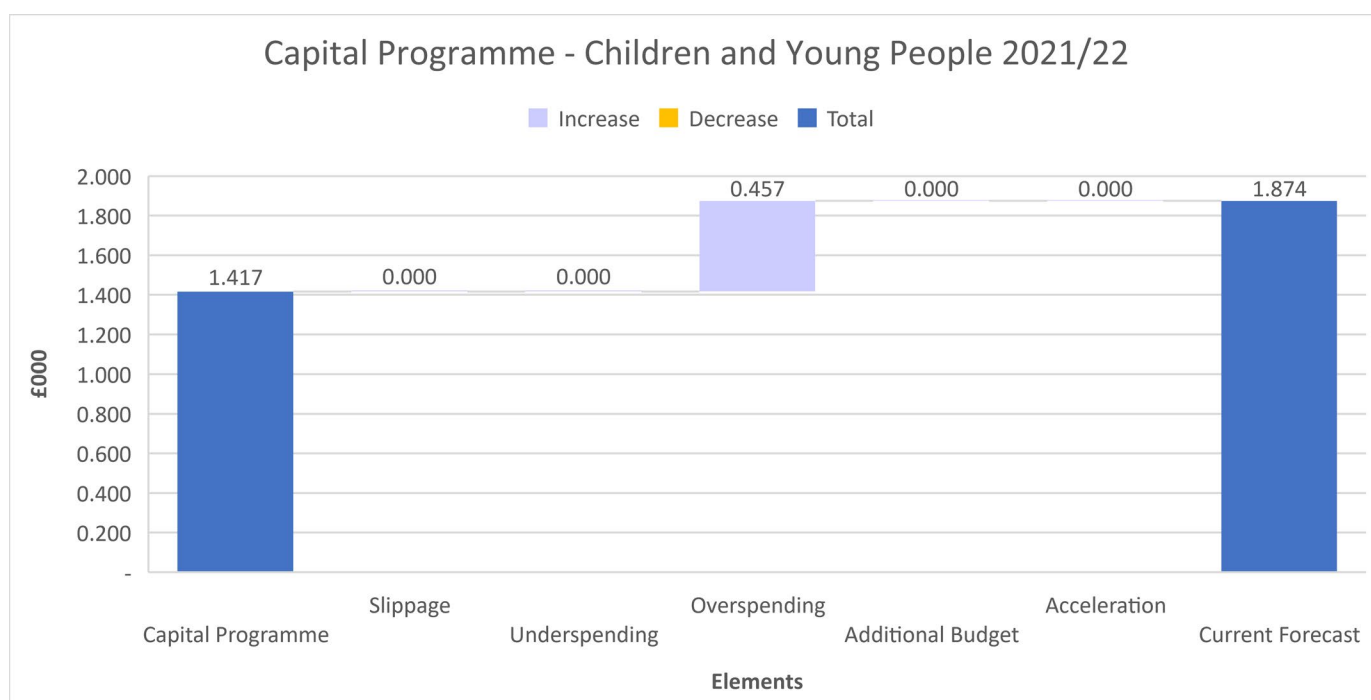
4. There are eight schemes within this portfolio; three of the schemes in delivery are rated green, indicating that the project is reporting to plan. Five of the schemes are rated as amber, indicating that there is an issue, but that it can be dealt with by the project manager or project delivery team. An update on the progress of the schemes not rated green are detailed in the table below:

Scheme	RAG Status at 31 st December	Reason	Latest RAG Status	Updated Position
Children's In-House Phase 1 – Brightstar (formerly Cissbury Lodge)	AMBER	Project completion has taken longer than planned.	AMBER	Practical completion achieved. Aftercare process in place. Expected to complete by March 2022.
Children's In-House Phase 1 – May House	AMBER	Practical completion achieved.	AMBER	Cost and quality issues being reviewed.
Children's In-House Phase 2 – High Trees and 40 Teasel Close	AMBER	Planned decant to Maidenbower whilst works are being undertaken no longer possible.	AMBER	Viability now underway on alternative accommodation for decant.

Scheme	RAG Status at 31 st December	Reason	Latest RAG Status	Updated Position
Children's In-House Phase 2 – 18 Teasel Close Design Stage	AMBER	Planned decant to Maidenbower whilst works are being undertaken no longer possible.	AMBER	Viability now underway on alternative accommodation for decant.
Children's In-House Phase 2 – Orchard House	AMBER	Delay in planning decision approval and RIBA Stage 4	AMBER	Remains Amber due to Maidenbower dependency.

Finance Summary - Capital

- The capital programme; as approved by County Council in February 2021, agreed a programme totalling £1.0m for 2021/22. £0.417m of expenditure, originally profiled to spend in 2020/21, was slipped into 2021/22, revising the capital programme to £1.417m.
- Since this time, the profiled spend has increased overall by £0.457m, to give a current year end projection for 2021/22 of £1.874m. All of this increase relates to project overspending.



Key:

Capital Programme – The revised planned expenditure for 2021/22 as at 1st April 2021.
Slippage – Funding which was planned to be spent in 2021/22 but has since been reprofiled into future years.
Underspending – Unused funding following the completion of projects.
Overspending – Projects that require further funding over and above the original approved budget.
Additional Budget – Additional external funding that has entered the capital programme for the first time.
Acceleration – Agreed funding which has been brought forward from future years.
Current Forecast – Latest 2021/22 financial year capital programme forecast.

- Details of movements of the financial profiling within the capital programme between October and December are as follows:

- **Overspending: £0.457m. Movement since Q2 report: £0.457m.**
 - **High Trees - £0.349m** – Approval has been granted for a further £1.698m towards the refurbishment of High Trees Children’s Home, creating a total budget of £1.799m for these works. This is funded by corporate resources with £0.349m to be spent in the current financial year and the remainder in 2022/23.
 - **Teasel Close - £0.108m** - Approval has been given for a further £0.976m towards the refurbishment of 18 Teasel Close Children’s Home, creating a total budget of £1.081m for these works. This is funded by corporate resources with £0.108m to be spent in the current financial year and the remainder in 2022/23.

Risk

8. The following table summarises the risks on the corporate risk register that would have a direct impact on the portfolio. Risks to other portfolios are specified within the respective appendices to this report.

Risk No.	Risk Description	Previous Quarter Score	Current Score
CR61	A 'serious incident' occurs resulting in the death or serious injury of a child where the Council is found to have failed in their duty to safeguard, prevent or protect the child from harm.	15	15
CR69	If the council fail to make the necessary improvements to progress from the previous 'inadequate' rating, there is a risk that children's services will fail to deliver an acceptable provision to the community.	20	15
CR72	The government have stipulated that from 9 th September 2021, children in care under 16 will not be allowed to be accommodated in unregulated placements. This has strengthened existing regulations that stipulate that all children and young people who require residential care must be placed within registered children's homes. Due to a local and nationwide shortage of registered provision there is a risk that these children and young people will not be cared for in settings that best meet their needs , which could lead to safeguarding concerns and enforcement action against the providers of unregistered homes and local authorities.	16	16

9. Further details on all risks can be found in **Appendix 5** - Corporate Risk Register Summary.