

Children and Young People Portfolio – Summary

Performance Summary

1. The Portfolio has a number of performance highlights to report this quarter:
 - The most recent Ofsted Monitoring Visit took place on 30th and 31st March 2022. The improvement noted by Ofsted in the quality of the service and performance within Children Young People and Learning was positive overall and demonstrates that we are continuing with our recovery as planned.
 - The Commissioner who provides an independent scrutiny and monitors the service performance, has conducted a full review of the evidence of progress during 2021. He submitted his latest report to the Secretary of State in January 2022. In acknowledgement of the improvements that have been made by the Council, his report recommended that the Government remove the statutory direction for a Children's Trust, allowing Children's Service to remain within West Sussex County Council. His report outlined the steps taken by the Leader of the Council and the wider Council to ensure that Children's Services is properly supported and resourced to maintain the pace of improvement. His recommendation has now been approved by the Secretary of State which has put a stop to a Trust arrangement. This is a significant milestone on our recovery.
 - The children's social care service has now been redesigned and configured to implement the Family Safeguarding model (phase 1) which includes more focused assessment teams and dedicated family support workers. The new service models have moved away from being centre-based and becoming more integrated, flexible, and able to maximise impact out in the community to reach our most vulnerable children, young people, and families. Demand in terms of child protection and children in care plans has safely reduced and remains stable.
 - We have created space for increased understanding of performance data and shared learning across the Portfolio, with a particular focus on ensuring our culture is inclusive and child centred. We have strengthened governance arrangements through our Performance Management Framework, to ensure that more effective management oversight and scrutiny of practice improvements for children and families are embedded and sustained. This has resulted in improved performance outcomes in key parts of the service. For example, review child protection conferences, children looked after reviews, personal education plans and review health assessments.
 - Workforce development activity has been implemented. This has resulted in levels of service remaining strong and largely unaffected by Covid-19 absences during quarter four.
 - The quality assurance and performance frameworks are now embedded and are assisting in driving best outcomes for children and families. This was endorsed by Ofsted during the recent monitoring visit.

- Work on the integration of electronic recording systems which is a major programme of activity for 2022/23 has moved forward as planned. The contract has been awarded with work commencing in April 2022.

Our Council Performance Measures

Children & Young People		2021/22 Target	Performance Over The Last 3 Periods			DoT	Performance Analysis	Actions
			Sep-21	Dec-21	Mar-22			
1	Percentage of re-referrals to Children's Social Care within 12 months of the previous referral Reporting Frequency: Quarterly	23.0%	29.6%	19.9%	23.0%	↘	Mar-22: Re-referrals have remained static and are within a range, which is not a concern. We have seen a significant rise in the number of referrals in March, which will again impact on our re-referral numbers.	There will always be a level of fluctuation within this area but will remain under scrutiny to ensure that if there are any significant increases that this will be reviewed, and any practice concerns addressed.
2	Percentage of Early Help Plans closed with outcomes met Reporting Frequency: Quarterly	72.0%	67.7%	68.1%	68.0%	↘	Mar-22: Lower than target but consistent with the levels achieved in the last 12 months.	Putting more focus on outcomes and closures and hopeful to see improvement on this target in the coming year.
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%	11.2%	9.8%	10.6%	↘	Mar-22: We have seen a small increase in this figure this month, though this has included three children who we have moved positively either back into West Sussex or into in-house provision.	The Entry to Care Panel is now established, and we have growing confidence that we are identifying the right placements for children.
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%	53%	57%	↗	Mar-22: Positively this measure has shown some improvement consistent with this being a priority area for the service. Following work initiated in the Journey To Independence sub-group, we are now developing our joint working relationship with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), for example our young people can no longer be sanctioned without the Care Leavers service being spoken to- whilst not directly impacting on the EET figure this goes to show how we are trying to work across agencies and get the DWP to consider care leavers as a priority.	We have now agreed a new protocol between the DWP and the Care Leavers service which includes an increased coaching offer accessible to care leavers.
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%	66.4%	55.3%	70.0%	↗	Mar-22: We continue to see gradual improvement in this area but still requires a strong drive to improve.	The continued implementation of the Family Safeguarding approach, with its focus on trajectory planning with families, should support further improvement. Benchmarking with good and outstanding authorities will be taking place this year to sense check this target.

Finance Summary

Portfolio in Year Pressures and Mitigations

Pressures	(£m)	Mitigations and Underspending	(£m)	Year end budget variation (£m)
Covid-19 pandemic expenditure	£0.146m	Funding from Covid-19 grant	(£0.146m)	
Placement costs for mainstream children	£2.550m	In-house residential staffing underspend	(£1.645m)	
Placement costs for children with disabilities	£1.170m	Staffing underspends within Social Care, Safeguarding Quality and Practice and Business Support teams	(£1.949m)	
Children we Care For non-placement costs	£2.550m	Reduction in Intentionally Homeless families requiring accommodation support	(£1.106m)	
Undelivered 2020/21 & 2021/22 savings	£0.256m	Early Help staffing underspend	(£0.930m)	
		Children First Improvement Fund underspend	(£0.090m)	
		Additional income in relation to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children	(£0.580m)	
		In year underspending from homeworking/ change in service delivery due to pandemic restrictions	(£0.260m)	
		Other minor variations	(£0.104m)	
Children and Young People Portfolio - Total	£6.672m		(£6.810m)	(£0.138m)

Key Financial Issues and Risks Arising

Key Financial Issues and Risks Arising	Narrative	Cost Driver	Baseline	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Action	Trajectory	
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%	13.4%	↗	Despite improvements in the purchasing mix of placements for Children We Care For (CWCF) during Q2, this was not sustained during Q3 or Q4. 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 that cost avoidance has not materialised at the level expected. The trajectory remains red because of the three placement types highlighted, external residential is the most expensive and small changes in percentages can have a significant financial impact.	↗
		% mainstream children in external foster care placements	25.5%	28.6%	28.1%	28.6%	26.4%	↘		
		% mainstream children in internal foster care placements	30.3%	28.3%	28.1%	28.5%	26.4%	↘		

Financial Narrative on the Portfolio's Position

2. The 2021/22 outturn position for the Children and Young People Portfolio budget is an underspend of £0.138m. This is a reduction of £0.638m when compared to the £0.5m overspend forecasted in December. The main movement during this period relates to a reduction in staffing expenditure.

Review of the 2021/22 Financial Year

3. The primary area of budget pressure for the portfolio has again been the cost of placements for Children We Care For. Despite the overall number of Children We Care For being lower than that estimated during the 2021/21 budget setting process, the proportion of children placed in more expensive external placement types has remained higher throughout the year than was forecast when the budget was set. This has led to an overspend of £2.550m against the mainstream placement budgets in 2021/22. The placement budgets for Children With Disabilities, overspent by £1.170m due to the significant costs involved in meeting the requirements of a small number of young people with highly complex needs. Overspends in both of these areas have been exacerbated by a combination of regulatory delays in re-opening the re-modelled Council's own residential homes and issues in recruiting sufficient staff in these homes to safely operate at full capacity.
4. Another area of significant overspend was in relation to non-placement costs for Children We Care For, such as transport from their placement to school, transport for family contact arrangements, support to enable kinship care, therapy etc. Initially the projected overspend was identified as expenditure on vulnerable children and families under Section 17 Children Act 1989 Children in Need, however an officer task and finish group looking into the issue discovered that the majority of expenditure has actually been in relation to these types of non-placement costs for Children We Care For. Despite implementing arrangements to improve the governance around this spend, the forecast remained high in the latter part of the year and ended as a £2.6m overspend. Although the 2022/23 budget has been increased by £0.8m in this area, given the size of the overspend in 2021/22, there is a risk that overspending will continue in the new financial year. Further work by officers to mitigate this projected overspend in the new financial year is underway.
5. There have been some mitigations in year. As previously reported, within the Early Help service a number of staffing positions remained vacant during the year, pending the implementation of the redesign which went live in January 2022. However, there have been a number of posts in the new structure which were not able to be appointed to and have remained vacant. This has led to an underspend of £0.9m despite absorbing the cost of redundancies arising from the re-design. Given the ongoing difficulties in recruiting to vacant posts, there is a likelihood that the Early Help service will again underspend in 2022/23.
6. The Council-run Children's Residential Service has continued to build on the new operating model implemented in 2020/21, however recruitment of staff to the re-opened homes has been slower than expected. This, combined with regulatory delays in re-opening the homes has meant that the service is not operating at full capacity, leading to an underspend of £1.6m at the end of the year.

7. The Portfolio underspent by £1.949m on staffing vacancies within Social Care and other key support teams. As at the end of March 2022, there were 23.25fte of social worker positions which were vacant and not covered by agency staff. This reflects the ongoing difficulty experienced throughout the year in recruiting and retaining social workers, including the lack of availability of agency workers to cover vacant posts. This vacancy gap, along with the cost of the revised social worker pay scales being less than forecast, has led to underspending on the social worker budgets.
8. Another area which has again underspent significantly this year is support for Intentionally Homeless families. The number of families receiving Council support was 30 in March 2021 and ended the year at 29 with minimal fluctuation in the numbers during the 12-month period. This led to an underspend of £1.1m at the end of the financial year. Despite this, all of the service intelligence in conjunction with the increase in the cost of living would indicate that this is unlikely to remain the case in 2022/23.
9. Despite the ongoing impacts of the pandemic, planned savings for the Children's budget have mostly either been delivered in full or temporarily mitigated through underspending. The two exceptions, which are relatively minor in value, are Early Help where following the public consultation process it was agreed to retain one further delivery point for the new service; and Intentionally Homeless where an initiative to use grant funding from Homes England to covert unused Council assets into accommodation for families ceased once the grant funding was withdrawn.

Children First Improvement Plan

10. The delivery of the Children First Improvement Plan was supported with a combination of both permanent and temporary funding totalling £9.0m in 2021/22. There was a small underspend of £0.090m at the end of the financial year.
11. This funding has continued to support the service to implement the improvements required, which has resulted in a revised Statutory Direction being issued in March 2022. This has meant that the implementation of a separate Children's Trust has been halted and the delivery of Children's Services in West Sussex will remain in the control of the Council. Whilst this decision is welcome and evidence of the excellent progress the Service has made on its improvement journey, the Children's Commissioner was keen to highlight that that progress must continue in his recommendation to the Secretary of State: -

"Clearly, in the view of the Commissioner, the overwhelming weight of the evidence considered for these purposes indicates that the progress in WSCC is on track and that the costs and disruption of introducing a trust now do not warrant the step. The picture is not a perfect one. It is again clear from this exercise that while all of the building blocks are now in place, there can be no avoiding the long, hard iterative work of driving relentlessly and collectively at granular practice improvement on a case by case, worker by worker level."

John Coughlan CBE, Commissioner for Children's Services in West Sussex

12. The funding approved for the Children First Improvement Plan within the 2022/23 budget is a critical dependency for the success of the service improvements that are currently underway.

Outlook for 2022/23

13. The budget remains subject to significant risk in 2022/23. The biggest unknown remains the number and mix of placements for Children We Care For and the resulting cost. Although the model upon which the 2022/23 budget was set used sound assumptions at that point, given the volatility relating to Children We Care For it only takes one or two placements to lead to further overspending. Indeed, at the end of February 2022, residential placement arrangements were agreed for specific complex placement at a cost of £0.024m per week. The average cost of an external residential placement is around £0.004m per week. Whilst the intention is that the care package implemented will enable the needs of the young person to de-escalate, if the arrangements do remain in place for the full financial year, then this one case alone will add a budget pressure of £1.4m in 2022/23. The Service continue to try to manage such pressures in the following ways –

- **Entry to Care Panel.** This panel, chaired by an Assistant Director, considers every child or young person for whom a placement is proposed. Amongst other things, the panel assesses whether there are potential alternatives to a placement and ensures that the type of placement proposed is the most appropriate for the needs of the child.
- **High-cost Placements Panel.** This panel is also chaired by an Assistant Director and involves senior managers from the service reviewing the high-cost placements to ensure that they are still required to meet the needs of the child, and to concentrate on a step down or exit plan.
- **Phase Two of the Fostering Service Review.** This will be implemented during 2022/23. The ambition is to increase the proportion of children placed with internal foster carers, hence reducing the reliance on external placements. Savings are anticipated to be generated from 2023/24.
- **Family Safeguarding.** The phased implementation of the new operating model of Family Safeguarding began in February 2022. One of the longer-term outcomes of the model is a reduction in the number of children taken into care. Financial efficiencies could begin to be generated from 2023/24. However, implementing this new operating model is a large-scale transformation programme and is dependent on additional one-off funding being awarded by the Department for Education (DfE) to enable the Council to proceed. The next phase is to begin recruiting workers who will focus on the adults in a family, which are critical roles to the success of the Family Safeguarding model. It is planned that these roles will begin to be filled in the Autumn of 2022.

14. Another significant unknown for 2022/23 is in relation to Intentionally Homeless. Although the eviction ban which was introduced during the pandemic was lifted in early 2021, the number of families receiving support from the Children's budget has not really changed. However, all of the service intelligence points to a problem which will become apparent at some point in the future. It is difficult to forecast exactly when and what the impact on the

Council's budgets may be – hence, this is an area which will remain subject to close monitoring in the new financial year.

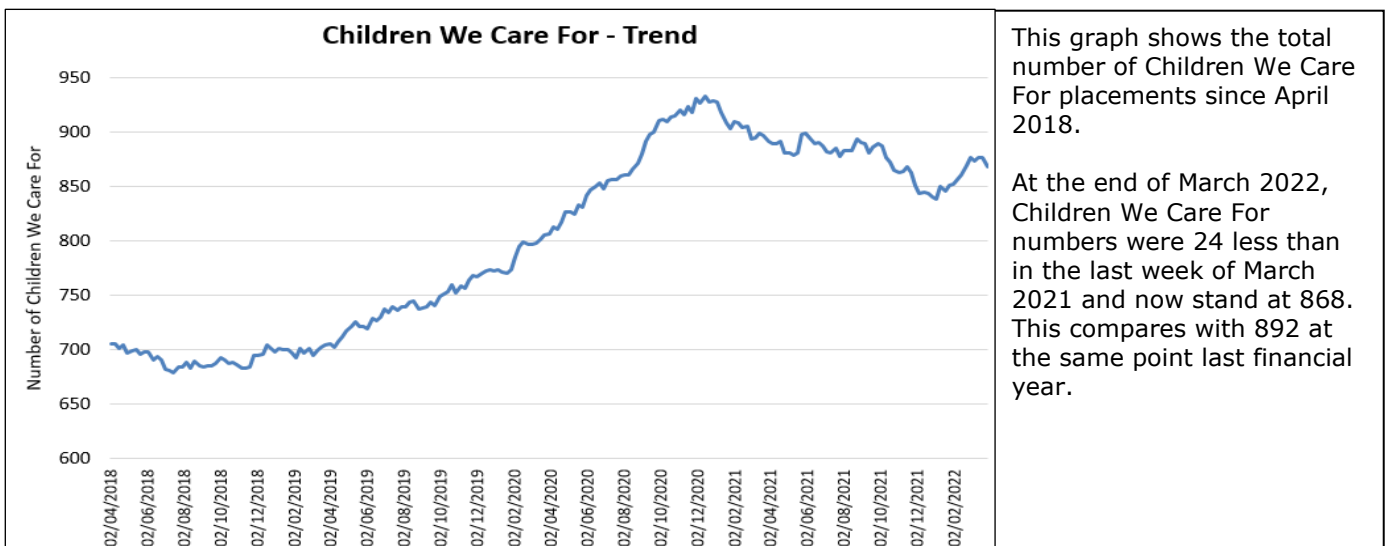
15. Although in 2021/22 the Children's budget ended more or less balanced, this was only possible due to some significant underspends mitigating the pressures as outlined above. While there is potential for some of the mitigations to continue in 2022/23, mostly due to staff recruitment difficulties, there is a financial risk that underspends will not materialise at the same level in 2022/23. In addition, further pressures caused by increasing energy and fuel prices may lead to providers requesting additional inflationary increases on their contracts. All of this means that 2022/23 will be another challenging year to manage within the allocated budget.

Proposed Carry Forward Requests

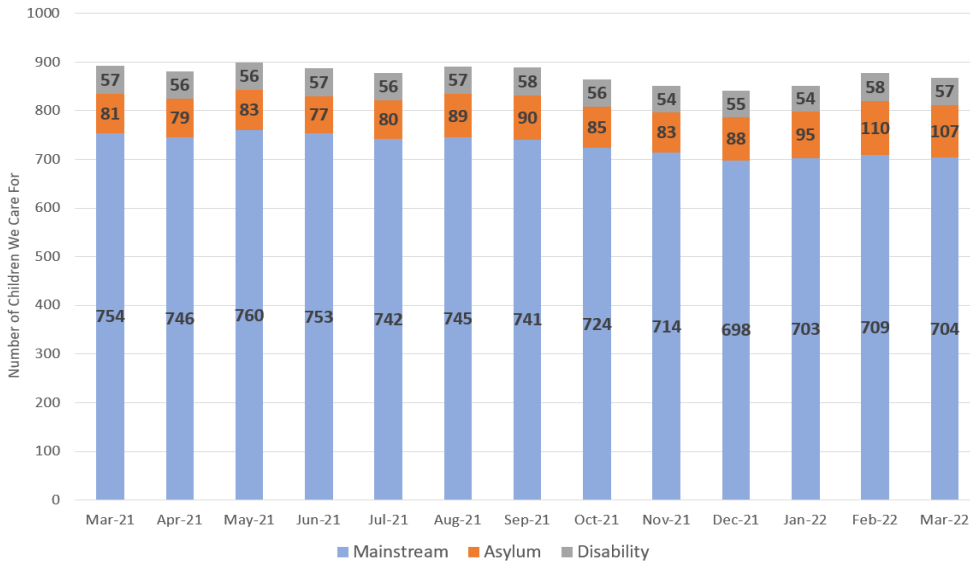
16. A number of carry forward requests have been actioned during the closing of the accounts including the following items within the Children and Young People's Portfolio:

2021/22 Carry Forward Requests	Amount
Youth Justice Service – To fund projects including speech and language therapy, specific training and alternative education provision.	£40,000
West Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership – To fund the implementation of an improvement plan in 2022/23.	£163,000

Cost Drivers Information



Children We Care For Volumes - Rolling 12 Months

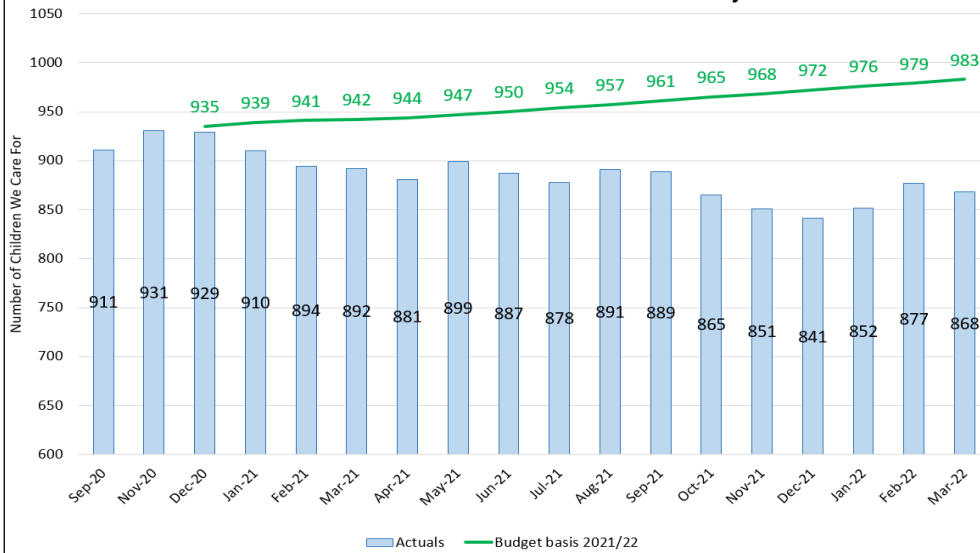


This graph shows the total number of Children We Care For placements by:

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

In line with the now mandatory National Transfer Scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children, the number of UASC Children We Care For has increased. The Council's allocation under the National Transfer Scheme is 124.

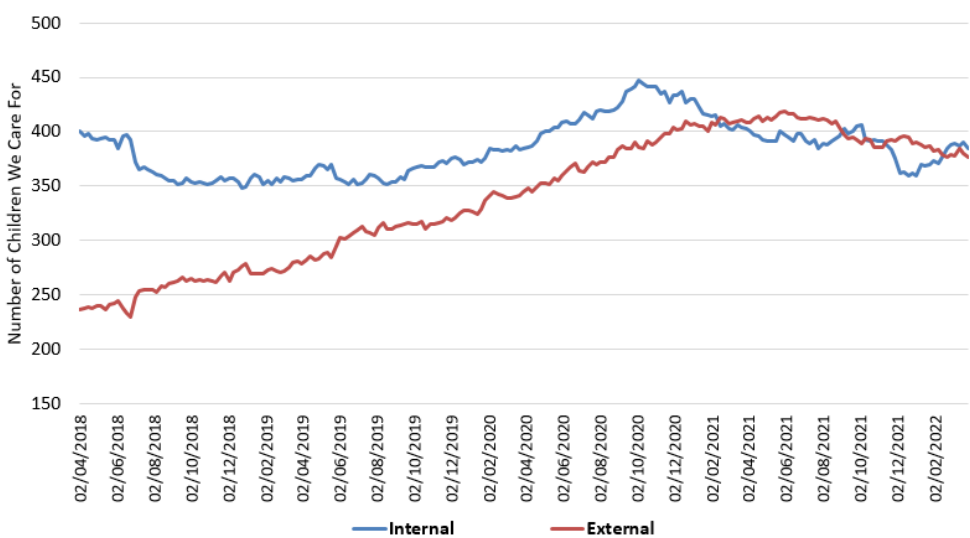
Number of Children We Care For - Actual Versus Projected



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 overspend reported.

Children We Care For - Internal Versus External



This graph shows the internal and external placement mix of Children We Look After since April 2018.

Savings Delivery Update

17. 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	March 2022		Narrative	2022/23
Lease of vacant properties to reduce intentionally homeless costs	150	44	G	<p>£0.044m is the full year effect for one family who were accommodated under this scheme in 2020/21, plus the in-year saving from one further family moving from bed and breakfast accommodation into a second property.</p> <p>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.</p>	G
		56	R		Saving Removed

Saving Activity	2021/22 Savings £000	March 2022		Narrative	2022/23
National House Project	250	250	G	<p>The savings which were initially expected in Q4 of 2021/22 will not now be delivered until 2022/23, due to Covid-19 related delays in progressing the House project. The 2021/22 savings have been mitigated by other savings which have over-performed.</p> <p>There is a good level of confidence that this saving will be delivered permanently in 2022/23, along with the additional £0.750m target in 2022/23</p>	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	<p>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. This saving has been mitigated in year however, through underspending within the residential staffing budget given the delayed timescale for reopening.</p>	G
Reduce the number of solo placements and retainers	100	100	B		B
Improved commissioning for children's social care service - 16+ step down	1,800	450	B		B
Improved commissioning for children's social care service - 16+ recommissioning		100	B		B

Saving Activity	2021/22 Savings £000	March 2022		Narrative	2022/23
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. Unfortunately, this saving was not achieved in full in 2021/22, however it has been mitigated 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	B		B
Improved commissioning for children's social care service - U16 step down to fostering		200	G	This saving has been mitigated in year through other commissioning initiatives which are over performing; however, it is expected to be delivered in 2022/23 through the commissioning work currently underway.	G
Early help restructure (Year 2 savings)	550	450	B	The Early Help redesign has now been implemented; hence the saving target can be marked as delivered. The increase in the number of delivery points means that the cost of the new service will be more than previously modelled, leading to a shortfall in savings in 2021/22. This £0.1m pressure has been mitigated within the 2022/23 budget.	B
		100	R		Saving Removed
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.	Saving Removed
Increased grant funding towards support for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children	450	450	B		B
Review of agency staff	231	231	B		B

Savings Key:

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

Capital Programme

Performance Summary - Capital

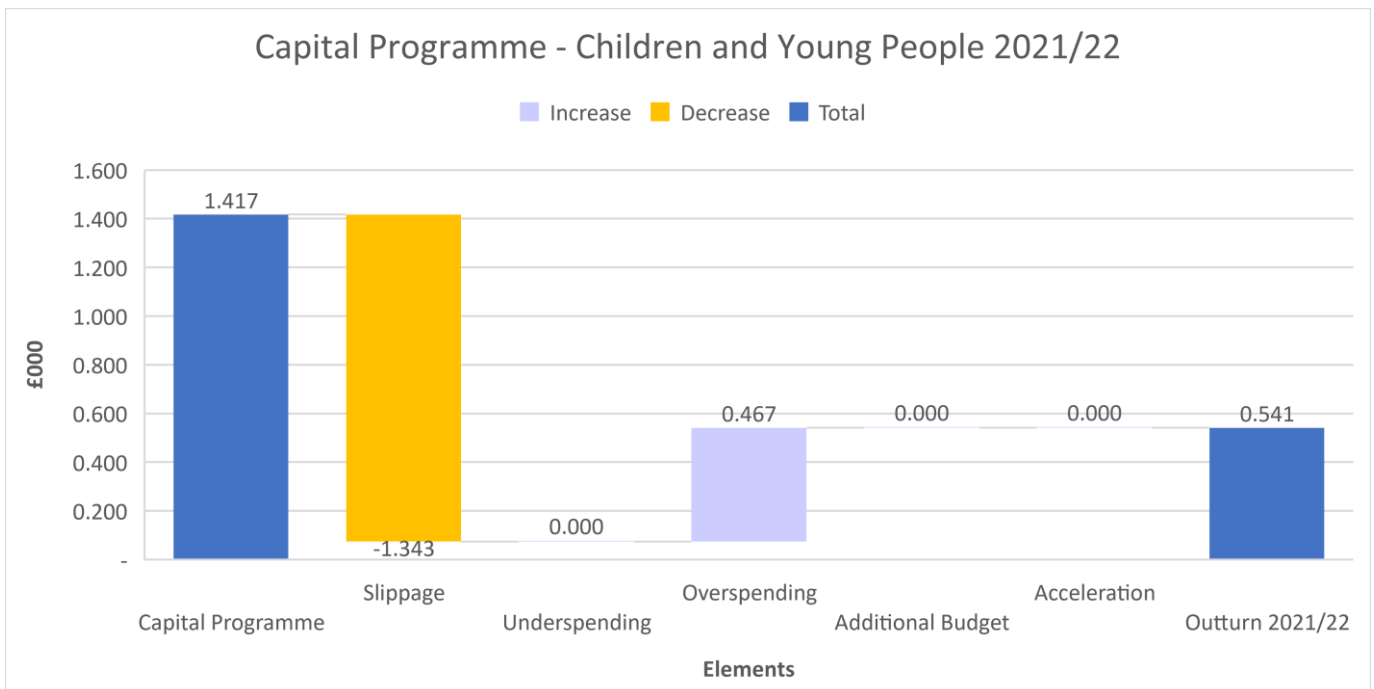
18. There are eight schemes within this portfolio; three of the schemes in delivery are rated green, indicating that the schemes are progressing as planned. Five of the schemes are rated as amber, indicating that there is an issue, but that it can be dealt with by the project manager or project delivery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

Scheme	RAG Status at 31 st March	Reason	Latest RAG Status	Updated Position
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	Feasibility study underway to assess alternative accommodation for required decant.
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	Feasibility study underway to assess alternative accommodation for required decant.
Children's In-House Phase 2 – Orchard House	AMBER	There is a dependency with schemes at High Trees & Teasel	AMBER	Feasibility study underway to assess alternative accommodation for required decant.

Finance Summary - Capital

19. 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.

20. During the year, the Portfolio spent £0.541m, a reduction of £1.333m when compared to the profiled spend in December 2021.



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.

Outturn 2021/22 - Total capital programme expenditure as at 31st March 2022.

21. Details of movements of the financial profiling within the capital programme between December and March are as follows:

- **Slippage: (-£1.343m). Movement since Q3 report: (-£1.343m).**
 - **Orchard House – (-£0.771m)** – Delays during the design stage have led to delays with this project. Construction works expected to commence in 2022/23.
 - **Teasel Close – (-£0.129m)** – Delays during the design stage have led to delays with this project. Construction works are expected to commence in 2022/23.
 - **High Trees – (-£0.292m)** – Delays during the design stage have led to delays with this project. Construction works are expected to commence in 2022/23.
 - **May House – (-£0.074m)** – Small amount of budget transferred into 2022/23.
 - **Seaside – (-£0.062m)** – Small amount of budget transferred into 2022/23.
 - **East Preston and Cissbury Lodge – (-£0.015m)** – Small amount of budget transferred into 2022/23.

- **Overspending: £0.467m. Movement since Q3 report: £0.010m.**
 - **Brick Kiln - £0.010m** – Project is complete with a small overspend. The additional £0.010m of budget funded by borrowing has been added to the project to cover the additional cost.

Risk

22. 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.	15	15

Risk No.	Risk Description	Previous Quarter Score	Current Score
CR72	<p>The government have stipulated that from 9th 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.</p>	16	12

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