

Audit and Governance

Dorset County Council



Date of Meeting	24 July 2017
Officer	Sara Tough - Director for Children, Adults and Communities.
Subject of Report	Children Services Budget
Executive Summary	<p>The Audit and Governance Committee have paid close attention to the budget pressures that Children Services have and continue to face. There are 4 areas where demand is causing budget pressure. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looked after Children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Projected £7million overspend • SEN Travel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Projected £1million overspend • Social Work Agency Spend <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Projected £500,000 overspend • High needs block of the DSG <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Projected £2.6million overspend <p>All of these areas have seen a significant demand for resources. This paper outlines the work that is currently being undertaken in reducing the costs of Looked after Children and covers and provides information on the current position in relation to looked after children. It outlines our approach to predicting future numbers of looked after children and the challenges associated with this and defines our current projections. The report also provides a summary of the ongoing and planned activity to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the numbers of children entering the care system • Increasing the numbers of children safely leaving the care system • Reduce the costs associated with providing care
Impact Assessment:	<p>Equalities Impact Assessment:</p> <p>There is no requirement for an EQIA.</p>

Children Services Budget

<p><i>Please refer to the protocol for writing reports.</i></p>	<p>Use of Evidence:</p> <p>In determining the action that are being undertaken to address the budget pressure research has taken place into what works in this service area. We have also consulted other local authorities that have confirmed issues such as the rise in domestic violence experienced by Children Services are mirrored around the country. This has confirmed that the demand pressures felt here are common place and increasing.</p> <hr/> <p>Budget:</p> <p>The work outlined in the paper and the intended outcome will help reduce the budget required to keep children safe. This will enable the council to fulfil its statutory duties as outlined in various legislation with regard to vulnerable children and young people</p> <hr/> <p>Risk Assessment:</p> <p>Having considered the risks associated with this decision using the County Council’s approved risk management methodology, the level of risk has been identified as: Current Risk: HIGH Residual Risk HIGH</p> <p>There are financial risks with regard to potential overspends with regard to LAC budgets. Numbers of children in the care of the authority are coming down but the costs and mix of provision are creating pressures due to some very specialist and complex cases. There are also human risks if we do not meet the needs of vulnerable young people.</p> <p>This paper provides the evidence of the work being undertaken to mitigate such risks.</p> <hr/> <p>Other Implications:</p> <p>All members and officers have duties as Corporate Parents to ensure that the children in the care of the council are safe and achieve to their highest potential.</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>That Audit and Governance Committee monitor the progress of the actions outlined in this paper and receive further reports on the work to address the other budget pressures as outlined in the executive summary</p>
<p>Reason for Recommendation</p>	<p>The report provides details of the cost calculator (Loughborough University) which enables some very exact cost information to be calculated. This will add another layer of reassurance about the impact of the work being undertaken.</p>
<p>Appendices</p>	<p>Only those in the report</p>
<p>Background Papers</p>	<p>None</p>
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