



CHILDREN'S (August 2020) - Risk Management The continual development and promotion of risk management will ensure that the Council is well placed to demonstrate that objective and informed decisions are taken and that the Council is ultimately in a strong position to successfully face and address the challenges ahead.

Score IMPACT	Financial	Legal / Compliance	Strategic	Safety, Wellbeing & Safeguarding	Reputation	Service Delivery
HIGH	Over £500k	Non-compliance with legislation or regulatory breach Significant regulatory impact	Complete failure of a strategic priority Major impact on a strategic priority	Fatality or life-changing injury / illness; Significant safeguarding breach Major injury / illness; moderate safeguarding breach	Complete failure in confidence (local or national) Long term media attention (local or national)	Complete failure to deliver critical services (safeguarding; urgent statutory responsibilities etc) Major impact on delivering critical services (safeguarding; urgent statutory responsibilities etc)
MEDIUM	£300k to £500k	Moderate regulatory impact	Moderate impact on a strategic priority	Moderate injury / illness	Medium term negative impact on public memory	Serious disruption to less critical services
LOW	£0k to £300k	Minimal regulatory impact No legal or regulatory impacts	Minor impact on a strategic priority Negligible impact on a strategic priority	Injury or illness requiring minimal intervention / treatment No health and safety impact	Short term negative impact on public memory Minor complaints or rumours	Minor disruption to services Negligible disruption to service delivery

Score LIKELIHOOD	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Type	0 to 40%	40% to 60%	61% to 100%
Description	Unlikely	Possible	Likely

The full **Children's Services Risk Register** can be viewed from this link - [HERE](#)

Children's Service Risk Profile					
		Likelihood			High Risks 11 in total
		L	M	H	
Impact	H	5	8	2	
	M	4	4	1	
	L	2	1	1	

CHILDREN'S SERVICES - Overall

		Likelihood			Commentary: High Risks = 11 The new format for risk reporting was agreed by Audit & Governance Committee at its May meeting. It was requested that closer links are enabled between the risk and performance measures. Also, members wanted to be able to more clearly see what updates have been made to the risk since the last report. Both changes will be incorporated into future reports, as will links with the control environment.
		L	M	H	
Impact	H	5	8	2	
	M	4	4	1	
	L	2	1	1	

Children's Care and Protection

		Likelihood			Child protection helps protect children and young people from bad things that are happening in their lives. It helps everyone understand who is doing what to help keep children safe. It's a way to get help and make things better. It helps to make sure that children are eating healthy food, have clean clothes, are protected from abuse, have good physical and emotional health and have a good education.
		L	M	H	
Impact	H	1	4	1	
	M		2		
	L		1	1	
High Risk: 104) A lack of sufficiency and resilience (placements/residential/foster care) impacts negatively on the demands led budget for children in care					
Response: Ensuring enough local placements for our children in care, closer to their families and communities, is a priority within our Strengthening Services for Children and Families Plan. We are undertaking focused work during Spring and Summer 2020 to further enhance our campaigns to promote Foster Care in Dorset, this has included social media and radio campaigns. We have an active group of Foster Carers who are continually helping us to shape our services and support. We are also continuing to deliver our Looked After Children Reduction Strategy agreed by Cabinet in July. This strategy explicitly states our commitment to reducing the number of children in our care.					
High Risk: 107) Inadequate evidence base (including Partnership data) to determine service need for children's care and protection					
Response: We are undertaking significant work to further strengthen practice and services through our Strengthening Services for Children and Families Programme. The developments in Business Intelligence are supporting us to understand and model service need and we will continue to develop this approach.					
High Risk: 112) Inability to attract and retain suitably qualified specialist safeguarding staff within Children's Services					
Response: We are progressing our recruitment and retention strategy and actively promoting Dorset Council Children's Services as an employer of choice. This has included: updating our recruitment webpages, increased promotion nationally through leading sector professional publication, writing to staff working with us through agencies to encourage their applications to permanent posts, pursuing overseas recruitment. Our Strengthening Services for Children and Families Programme includes significant work to expand our learning and development and support offer alongside manageable caseloads, regular and reflective supervision and integrated teams all of which are known to be important factors influencing social workers to apply for roles.					
High Risk: 105) Failure to keep children safe that are known to, or in the care of, Dorset Council					
Response: We are undertaking work to further strengthen practice and services through our Strengthening Services for Children and Families Programme.					
High Risk: 106) Failure to understand and respond to the changing nature of exploitation results in a safeguarding failure					
Response: Our new Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Partnership arrangements are now in place including the appointment of a highly regarded and experienced national sector leader as Independent Scrutineer. We, along with partners across Dorset County have published our new Child Exploitation Strategy 2020-2022 setting out how together we will ensure an effective and coordinated response to children and young people at risk of, or linked to exploitation, identifying potential risk early to reduce risk and harm.					

Children's Commissioning and Partnerships

		Likelihood			Early action, both early in life and early in a challenging episode for a child, young person or family is the most cost-effective way to address emerging issues. Services need to make sure they provide a targeted intervention according to need and that service users receive personalised packages of support. This will ensure that we efficiently provide the right amount of service to bring about change. We need to commission the right services, delivered at the right time and in places where people can use them, and Family Partnership Zones are integral to making this happen.
		L	M	H	
Impact	H	4	2		
	M	3		1	
	L	1			
High Risk: 284) Insufficient controls in place to ensure that operational employees use framework agreements effectively when sourcing education and support for children					
Response: As part of the new model for children's services, sourcing of education and support will be undertaken by a single team and under a single management structure. This will ensure that operational colleagues use their skills to assess and identify need and provide direct support to children and families. Brokerage officers will use a range of compliant procurement mechanisms (including framework agreements) to secure value for money for the council. The leadership team will continue to review and monitor external spend to provide assurance of compliance.					
High Risk: 281) Financial viability of nursery and after school provision unaffordable					
Response: The position of schools and early years settings is such that full DFE grant income continues to be made available irrespective of opening status. There are some pressures on school budgets that are covered by exceptional DFE grants. Early years settings are commercial settings and have in some cases responded by closure and furlough. Other settings are working closely with the Council to ensure they remain viable. Children's Services Leadership are undertaking a review of nursery and afterschool provision in order to understand the financial viability of providing nursery and afterschool provision as a fully traded service. Managers of these services have undertaken a review of income and expenditure and have put an income recovery plan in place. This will be subject to scrutiny by the management team.					
High Risk: 277) Insufficient availability of local placements and supported accommodation to meet local needs.					
Response: Ensuring enough local placements for our children in care closer to their families and communities and ensuring enough accommodation options for young people leaving care and other vulnerable young people is a priority within our Strengthening Services for Children and Families Plan. We have developed and published the Dorset Young People's Protocol between Housing and Children's Services, this is a joint protocol that describes how Housing and Children's Services will work together jointly to address the needs of 16- and 17-year olds.					

Children's Schools and Learning

		Likelihood			All children have a right to an education. Schools must provide each child with the help they need so that they can do well. This helps them to become confident adults. Schools can help all children by making sure that they provide high quality teaching, assess children's progress often and target areas of difficulty and adjust work for children who are struggling. Schools must also help children and young people with disabilities or medical conditions .
		L	M	H	
Impact	H		2	1	
	M	1	2		
	L	1			

High Risks: 271) Failure to keep school finances in balance

Response: It remains the position that maintained schools that are put into a category by Ofsted must convert to sponsored academy, leaving any deficit behind with the LA. Since last updating the register, three schools have become sponsored academies, leaving behind a combined deficit of approximately £2.26M. As of 31 March 2020, there were 30 maintained schools with a combined deficit of £2.5M. The number of schools has increased from 28 schools as of 31st March 2019, but the combined deficit is less than last year, which was £3.1M. There are currently two sponsored academies in the process of conversion, which will leave a combined deficit of approximately £220k. Ofsted inspections have been suspended during Covid19 lockdown, but when they do resume, the schools with a high risk of receiving an inadequate judgement have a combined deficit of £0.5M. Schools at medium risk of inadequate have a combined deficit of £200k. It is also currently unknown what the effect of lockdown will be on school balances, which were already showing a downward trend. Due to legislation changes it is no longer possible for school deficits to be converted to loans, so the only available strategy is to try to keep deficits to a minimum. Notices of concern have been issued and financial delegation has been removed in the past, but this does require an appropriate resource allocation by the LA. Training on good financial management will continue to be offered to schools and all schools in deficit are monitored and visited termly (lockdown permitting).

How Do We Currently Manage this Risk/Issue? We check DES monthly to see if the remaining balance for the year looks reasonable. We monitor all school budgets based upon estimates from the schools 3 times per year. We visit schools where there appears to be a problem and ask them to put together a plan to manage the budget. We ask schools to explain how they are intending to repay any deficit by licensing a deficit against a deficit recovery plan. We have sent a notice of concern to several schools and have suspended delegation in the past. When schools send in their budgets to the LA at the beginning of each financial year, they are required to comment on the budget and to provide a 3 year forward plan. If a school is causing concern, we are involved in the Team Around the School meeting to balance educational and financial priorities.

High Risk: 272) Failure to stabilise the budget for the High Needs Block

Response: Failure to stabilise the pressures in the HNB budget will result in a further increase in the deficit in the DSG. Legally this deficit sits with the DSG and is not part of the LAs budget, however, this does not absolve the LA of working with all schools to support actions to create an inclusive culture of support for pupils with additional and special educational needs in all Dorset schools. Work is being undertaken to move to early intervention and support for families across Dorset; to identify pupil needs earlier so that remedial support can be put in place quickly and thus try to stop expensive support later; to create specialist support in all schools and highly specialist support in local schools to reduce the need for pupils to be placed in the independent sector.

High Risk: 275) Unable to provide enough school places (Basic Need)

Response: The sufficiency strategy remains under review as Basic Need pressures reduce in most areas. There are still significant short-term pressures in East Dorset and Wimborne. New housing that is being introduced across the Council area will need to be monitored should pupil numbers rise. Full engagement with the Local Plan development is essential to ensure ongoing successful delivery of the LA Sufficiency Duty in the medium to long term. The Sufficiency Duty is continually monitored using relevant demographic data (including from other local authorities, schools and GP/Health sources), engagement with Planning Colleagues and developers around need and optimum solutions to school place planning in specific planning area. There are identified short, medium- and long-term solutions for increased place provision in each planning area, including a register of available schools for expansion, available schools with additional capacity (Net Capacity Assessment Maintenance by the LA) and secured and proposed new school sites. Liaison with Pyramids and Schools to ensure Schools Forum can direct revenue funding in accordance with Pupil Growth Policy, to ensure quality provision in schools is maintained while expansions take place.

There is need to reference that the LA has a duty, in areas where pupil numbers are falling, to ensure that schools/MATS and the LA work together to remove excess surplus from the system in a timely manner to ensure school viability and quality of provision is maintained.

