

## Children's Services – 2017/18 Qtr 1 Projected Outturn Revenue Monitoring Projected Outturn Variation + £ 5.196 million

Children's services has been subject to an unprecedented demand on service provision since the 2017/18 Council budget was approved on 28 February 2017.

Despite the inclusion of £ 9.3 million additional funding in 2017/18, there is currently a £ 5.2 million projection of net expenditure in excess of revenue budget provision by 31 March 2018.

£ 5.0 million of the projected additional net expenditure relates to placements within independent sector provision. It is currently estimated that there will be an additional 68 children in need of placements over and above the number of placements estimated when the 2017/18 budget was approved in February.

The analysis of the additional placements is per table 1 below.

**Table 1**

Independent Sector Placement	Projected Additional Placements 2017/18	Average Rate Per Week £	Projected Additional Cost in 2017/18 £'000
Fostering	35	773	1,407
Residential	16	3,300	2,746
16 +	11	975	558
Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children	6	773	241
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>		<b>4,951</b>

Whilst Tameside MBC is a member of the Placements North West commissioning arrangements, which seeks to minimise the market spend, it is currently the case that the framework prices are sometimes being exceeded across all local authority areas. Providers increasingly charge additional fees for, e.g. 1-1 care of a complex child or additional therapeutic input where that is a part of the care plan. The lack of available placements also drives the market price up.

It should be noted that the weekly placement cost for children placed in external residential care can exceed £ 3,000 per week. A continual review of external placements is facilitated to ensure children are receiving the appropriate care and support which has been commissioned together with the

opportunity to reduce the fees levied for the care and support provided. This is co-ordinated by the Placement Panel which is chaired by Assistant Director, Children, and includes finance and commissioning in the membership.

The £ 9.3 million additional investment referred to earlier included investment to support the recruitment of additional Social Workers to support the increased demand in caseloads.

The initial 2017/18 budget assumed whole service caseloads of 2,050. The number of caseloads had increased to 2,632 by 30 June 2017.

It should also be noted that the number of children looked after within these caseload totals has increased from 485 at December 2016 to 530 by June 2017, an increase of 45. This increase is reflected within the analysis provided with table 1.

The projected expenditure includes provision for 54 whole time equivalent temporary Social Workers recruited via independent agencies. The Council has a strategy to reduce the number of Social Workers on independent agency contracts onto permanent contracts to improve the quality and stability of the establishment. There is also an average annual cost saving of approximately £ 6,500 per employee when comparing permanently employed Social Workers to those employed via an independent agency.

A group to review the Borough wide Early Help offer is being led by the Director of Population Health and seeks to reduce demand for service in the medium term. In the immediate, the service has and will be implementing initiatives to intervene early with families, reduce service demand together with associated ongoing expenditure.

These initiatives include :

- Edge of care service to work with families beyond standard working hours and offer direct intervention earlier in the life of the problem to avoid admission to care.
- Recruitment of in borough foster carers. Currently the service is predicting a net gain of 9 fostering households in 2017-8. As part of the regional You Can Foster collaboration which will see a major advertising campaign in the autumn along with additional capacity in the fostering team which is in place in preparation, we anticipate this figure should grow further.
- Family group conferencing service has been running since quarter 3 of 2016-7 and is demonstrating clear success and efficacy. The service has a clear expansion plan to ensure maximum usage.
- From care to success. The transitions team to support our care leavers is in place and working well to ensure that care leavers are well prepared for adulthood and minimise the risk of future involvement. The team is working well with housing providers and partner agencies.

There are stringent monitoring arrangements and procedures in place relating to the performance and the associated budget of the service. A further update on the projected 2017/18 budget position at 31 March 2018 will be reported to the Executive Cabinet during the autumn of 2017.