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| Report To: | EXECUTIVE CABINET |
| Date: | 27 November 2019 |
| Executive Member/Reporting Officer: | Councillor Bill Fairfoull – Deputy Executive Leader (Children and Families) Richard Hancock – Director of Children’s Services |
| Subject: | LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN SUSTAINABILITY PROJECTS |
| Report Summary: | This report seeks to outline and contextualise the range of activity underway or planned within and across services, in order to best support the appropriate and effective management of the Looked After (Children in Care) population in Tameside. |
| Recommendations: | That support is given to the development of the 7 projects to make the LAC population sustainable, subject to further detail and costing estimates. |
| Links to Corporate Plan: | The work outlined sits under the Starting Well Programme and strongly aligns to the Resilient Families and Supportive Networks priority. |
| Policy Implications: | The paper directly links to the Corporate Plan, the Early Help Strategy for Tameside. Furthermore, as the Starting Well Partnership establishes, it is understood Early Help will be a partnership priority. |
| Financial Implications: | <p>Current spend on Looked After Children’s placements is approx. £6m in excess of budget. If trends over the previous 12 months continue, spend in this area could potentially increase by a further £6m p.a (to a total in excess of £40m). This is clearly unsustainable and the initiatives outlined in this report will aim to both contain future growth and also reduce current placement numbers by approximately 10% by April 2021.</p> <p>The areas of activity outlined in this report require investment in both Revenue and Capital terms. The Revenue investment requirement is currently estimated at c£2m and will provide key support infrastructure to mobilise the initiatives outlined. It is likely that an element of this investment will be for an initial fixed term period, rather than ongoing recurrent investment. Further detail will be provided as individual project details are worked through.</p> <p>Discussions are also taking place with CCG colleagues to ensure that the required investment is factored into the Strategic Commission’s medium term financial plan.</p> <p>The Capital investment implications have not yet been quantified, pending the outcome of discussions currently taking place through the Property subgroup which is undertaking a full review of all Children’s Services estate.</p> <p>Detailed Cost Benefit Analysis will be worked through for each proposal evidence bases from around the country where these are available. This will quantify the expected return on investment over the medium and longer term.</p> |

It is imperative that robust monitoring arrangements are in place to monitor progress against target reductions in spend and activity (particularly activity in high cost placement types) and regular updates will be provided.

Legal Implications:

The Council has a statutory duty to deliver efficient and effective services within a balanced budget. If the current rate of demand on children's services and our approach to such demand doesn't change the Council will effectively be bankrupt within 18 to 24 months.

This report sets out approaches that other councils have implemented to address demand and ensure able to meet statutory duties within budget. Importantly if the recommended actions are delivered not only will the service be significantly cheaper they deliver better outcomes.

In terms of Governance the Executive Member for Children's Services has a statutory duty and right to be sighted on these projects and their delivery and that needs to be reflected as technically he is required to answer any questions raised at Council. There should also be regular updates.

Risk Management:

Each project will be closely managed by a multi-disciplinary implementation team working to a named lead officer, reporting to the Assistant Director and Director of Children's Services. Regular reports will also be presented to the SLT.

Background Information:

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Richard Hancock:



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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline and contextualise a range of activity underway or planned across services, to effectively manage and make sustainable the Looked After population in Tameside.
- 1.2 This activity comprises of 7 key projects that will contribute towards achieving sustainability in our Looked After cohort.
- 1.3 The report presents a business case explaining the rationale and initial plan to reallocate existing resources; as well as making further investment and invest to save proposals.
- 1.4 The Power Point slide pack at **Appendix 1** provides an overview of this proposal.

2. CONTEXT – TAMESIDE LAC POPULATION

- 2.2 In Tameside the rate of Looked After Children remains high. On top of this, the mix of placement type of our LAC cohort is problematic, both in terms of local authority expenditure and quality of outcome for children and families.
- 2.3 Tameside's LAC number is currently at 710. Assuming there is no change of activity on last 6 months – there will be 756 LAC by the end March 2020; then 802 by end of September 2020.
- 2.4 Taking into account the age profile of our LAC these numbers can be revised to, 741 by end March 2020; then 784 by end of September 2020. This is due to the number of LAC turning 18 and therefore ceasing to be in local authority care.
- 2.5 Whilst children in Tameside at the point they enter care are appropriately assessed as in need of this intervention, it is clear that the number of children in our care is disproportionate when compared to statistical neighbours.

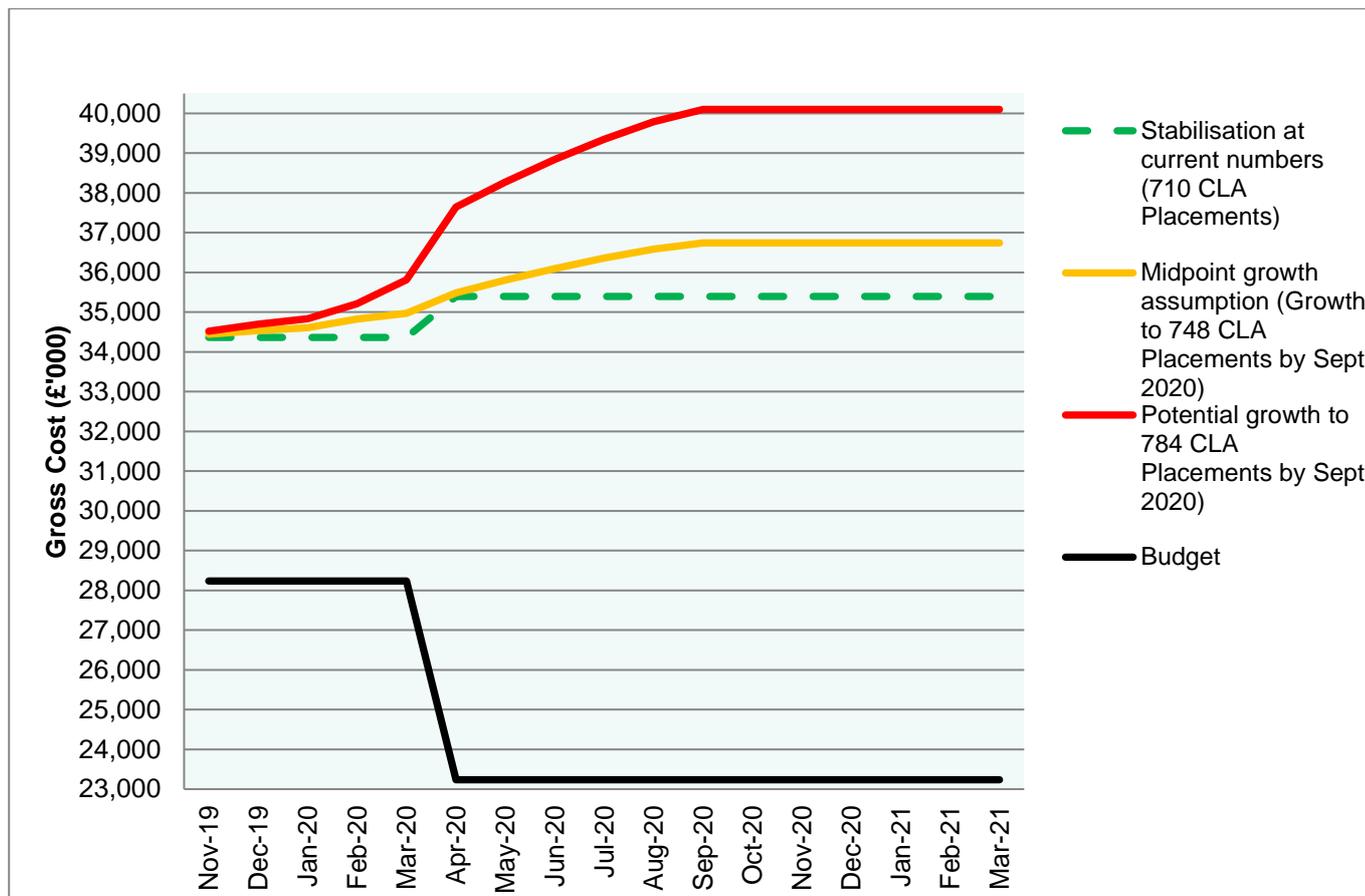
LAC indicative cost growth

- 2.6 The table below gives a breakdown of the nationally available comparators for placement types.

| | | | 6 months | 12 months |
|---|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | At 30 Sept 19 Actual T profile | At 30 Sept 19 T to SN profile | At 31 Mar 20 T to SN profile | At 30 Sept 20 T to SN profile |
| Foster placements | 447 | 527 | 550 | 582 |
| Placed for adoption | 28 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| Placement with parents | 71 | 46 | 48 | 51 |
| Other placement in the community | 21 | 12 | 13 | 13 |
| Secure units, children's homes and semi-independent | 114 | 82 | 86 | 90 |
| Other residential settings | 7 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| Residential schools | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Other placement | 21 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 710 | 710 | 741 | 784 |

- 2.7 The chart below shows the indicative growth in cost for the LAC cohort for the projections mentioned above at section 2.

2.8 It shows the projected case mix / placement profile based on the last 30 LAC placements. This has been weighted more towards a residential setting assumption for prudence purposes and taking account of current market capacity by placement type.



The current MTFP contains a Children's budget reduction of c£5m. This is being reviewed and updated in light of the current position and estimated future demand.

N.B. Rise at April 2020 = 3% inflationary increase

The figures do not factor in impacts of new initiatives at this stage (i.e. the projects outlined in this report)

3. CHALLENGES

3.1 In light of the above, our three key challenges to make the LAC cohort sustainable are:

1. **Reduce the need for local authority care.** This will be done by strengthening prevention work and improving children's progress through care. Families require more practical support earlier to prevent cases from escalating.
2. **Stabilise the existing LAC cohort.** We currently have too many expensive placements, and too many that are placed out of borough. We can stabilise placements by ensuring there is appropriate support and respite provision for both families on the Edge of Care and fostering placements nearing placement breakdown. This will include therapeutic support and support for families so that children can remain with them safely.
3. **Step down those children for whom it is safe and appropriate to do so.** Too many children remain in care for too long and only leave at the age of 18. This will be through improved care/permanency planning and a range of step-down options: e.g. Special Guardianship Orders or fostering.

4. OUTLINE OF 7 PROJECTS NEEDED

4.1 The report outlines 7 key projects that will help us to achieve sustainability for our Looked After Children cohort.

- **Project 1: Develop a model of core, multi-disciplinary Early Help service in each neighbourhood/ locality**
- **Project 2: Develop a Family Intervention Service (FIS) across the continuum of need and enable the Family Group Conference services to intervene at an earlier point on the continuum.**
- **Project 3: Develop the Team Around the School (TAS) approach**
- **Project 5: Positive Futures model (Respite/Assessment Units)**
- **Project 6: Fostering Service Improvement**
- **Project 7: Placements Review & LAC Sufficiency**

4.2 The below table shows how each project will contribute towards our three key challenges.

| | 1 Early Help | 2 Family Support Service | 3 Team Around School+ | 4 Duty / Locality | 5 Positive Futures | 6 Foster Carers | 7 Placements Review |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Reduce in flow | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Stabilise / move to permanence | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Step down | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Investment Summary

4.3 The overall cost for implementing each project is currently estimated to be in the regions of £2m. Additional to this estimate is the need for estates (£950k capital budget already earmarked). This will largely be for the Respite Unit and Assessment Unit (see project 5).

4.4 The below table shows a breakdown of the estimated cost across the 7 projects:

| Sustainability Project Reference | | Estimated Revenue Investment | Estimated Capital Investment |
|----------------------------------|--|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| | | £ Million | £ Million |
| 1 | Early Help & Prevention - Neighbourhoods | | |
| 2 | Family Intervention Service | 0.80 | |
| 3 | Team Around The School Plus | 0.05 | |
| 4 | Duty / Locality Restructure | | |
| 5 | Positive Futures - Respite / Assessment | 0.56 | 0.95 |
| 6 | Fostering Service Improvement | 0.15 | |
| 7 | Placements Review and Sufficiency | 0.63 | |
| Total | NB this currently includes an anticipated Health/CCG element to be agreed which it is anticipated will reduce this to circa 2.0M | 2.190 | 0.95 |

5. PROJECT 1: DEVELOP A MODEL OF CORE, MULTI-DISCIPLINARY EARLY HELP SERVICE IN EACH NEIGHBOURHOOD/ LOCALITY

- 5.1 The aim of this project is to develop the offer of Early Help and prevention by establishing better partnership working from multi-agency teams who will work with families in their neighbourhood area. Families will be able to access support in their community from professionals who know are able to respond to a wide range of needs in one place.
- 5.2 To implement this we will need to create 4 neighbourhood teams based in each Tameside locality (North, East, South, West). The teams will be made up of social care, health, police, education and VCF sector professionals who will work in partnership with one another. Each neighbourhood team will be able to build on local assets, and develop strong local intelligence.
- 5.3 Wrap-around support will be woven into each neighbourhood, which will help us to prevent the escalation of cases.
- 5.4 This model aligns with the 'Smarter, Stronger, Sooner, Safer' way of working as outlined in the Early Help Strategy.
- 5.5 What is required to develop the Early Help and prevention offer is namely the 4 Neighbourhood Hubs. Input from estates to ensure that there is a base in each locality. The model itself requires multi-agency buy-in and support to ensure that it is implemented properly
- 5.6 The impact of implementing this model will be a long-term reduction in the need for higher tier, statutory interventions, including bringing children into care.

6. PROJECT 2: DEVELOP THE FAMILY INTERVENTION SERVICE (FIS)

- 6.1 The Family Intervention Service will be developed to provide practical support and diversionary work to prevent admissions into care. It will do this by de-escalating risks across the continuum of need. Currently our offer is made up of Early Help and Edge of Care support. This is leaving a gap in the Child in Need, Child Protection and LAC stages.
- 6.2 The new model will provide a broader offer across the continuum of need to cover those children who are further up the scale of need, from Level 2 to Level 4, with focus on ongoing support. This means the service will be able to intervene at an earlier point no matter what the level of need is.
- 6.3 Support will be available from 8am to 8pm on weekdays and during weekends as well. The current Family Group Conference model will be extended across the service and all levels of need.
- 6.4 Families will be supported by the same worker if or when they are stepped up and down the continuum, allowing them to build up a better relationship and bank of knowledge about the family. They will be given practical support such as attending vital appointments. This is in-keeping with 'do with, not to' principle as outlined in the Public Service Reform principles.
- 6.5 The estimated total cost of additional investment required is £0.083 million in 2019/20 for part year implementation, increasing to £ 0.503 million in 2020/21. In terms of practical input, developing the Family Intervention Service will require project management support, and support from HR, Finance, Workforce Development and Estates.

- 6.6 It is anticipated that the impact of implementing this will be a medium-term reduction in the need for higher-tier, statutory interventions, including the need for children to be admitted into care. With ongoing support for families earlier on, we will see more stepping down of cases and a reduction in step-ups/ escalation of cases. Finally we will see a reduction in the rate of repeat referrals into the service, because families will be able to access support more easily.

7. PROJECT 3: DEVELOP THE TEAM AROUND THE SCHOOL (TAS) APPROACH

- 7.1 Roll-out of the Team Around the School approach will speed up to include all schools, colleges and nurseries and enhance the role of current TAS professionals in identifying support for children & young people. It will enable education providers to confidently support children and families to prevent escalation and provide the right support at the right time.
- 7.2 So far the model is well-established and has been well-received by secondary schools. It has prevented the need for children to move into statutory services and improved outcomes for children and families.
- 7.3 The current plan is to have 60 schools involved by December 2019. This will then be rolled out to all schools, with particular emphasis on ensuring that primary schools are on board. This project will extend this to pre-schools, ensuring that we can support the very youngest who are presenting with need for support.
- 7.4 Investment is needed to speed up the roll-out and to fully embed the TAS approach in schools through co-ordinator roles. The current cost estimate for this is £50,000. Support from HR and Finance is required to initiate the roll-out and secure co-ordinators.
- 7.5 Being able to identify the need to support children sooner, the medium-term impact is expected to be a reduction in the need for higher-tier, statutory interventions, formal Early Help interventions, Child in Need support and for children to come into care. It is anticipated that there will be an increase in stepping down of cases, a reduction in cases being stepped up, and a reduction of repeat referrals into the service.

8. PROJECT 4: RESTRUCTURE OF THE DUTY/LOCALITY TEAMS

- 8.1 This project will be to restructure the duty and locality teams to remove the extra 'step' in the care process for children and young people. The overall aim is to reduce the number of changes of social worker that children experience throughout their interaction with children's social care. By having fewer changes, social workers will be able to spend more time with children, build up a better banks of knowledge of their needs and wishes, and also through neighbourhood working, professionals working with children across multiple agencies will build up better contacts and relationships.
- 8.2 The current arrangement is that when a referral is received at the MASH, this is passed to the duty team for assessment, and then to locality for intervention, and finally to the LAC team (if appropriate). These teams are currently centrally located in the Denton Centre.
- 8.3 The new model will merge the current locality teams and duty teams into a single service and in phase two move out to be based in each locality. This will remove one 'hand-off' by combining the duty and locality team functions.
- 8.4 This restructure will be carried out in two phases:
- Phase 1: a restructure of the duty and locality teams to remove a step in the process.
 - Phase 2: a complete move to locality working, with teams based in each of the four neighbourhood holding a neighbourhood-based caseload.

- 8.5 This model, particularly phase 2, is closely aligned with the Early Help neighbourhood model (see Project 1).
- 8.6 Phase 1 of the restructure is a no-cost, streamlining process, whereas Phase 2 will require investment in order to have each of the neighbourhood teams based in their locality. Initially this project will require project management input, support from HR and Workforce Development, and in the longer term Estates and Finance will be needed to complete the implementation.
- 8.7 The impact of this new model will be to improve the continuity of work with families, enable social workers to build strong relationships, reduce reassessments and enable better management oversight of cases. It supports more effective case management for: Children in Need, Child Protection cases and Looked After Children. It is anticipated that this will enable and support cost avoidance and savings.

9. PROJECT 5: POSITIVE FUTURES MODEL (RESPITE/ASSESSMENT UNITS)

- 9.1 'Positive Futures', a Tameside development of a well recognised and regarded approach to effectively working with the 11 years plus cohort, will provide a respite/short break facility, an assessment unit and emergency short break/fostering placement provision. This will be delivered by an outreach team of key workers.
- 9.2 The objective to implementing this model is to prevent placement breakdown, and allow children who are at risk of being brought into care to safely remain at home. The model will work alongside the existing Edge of Care and Family Support Service.
- 9.3 The target recipients of this model will be children and young people aged 11 and over.
- 9.4 Respite Unit:
- Will provide up to 72-hour short breaks – planned and emergency
 - This is an alternative option to admitting a child into care, and instead stabilise their circumstances and support them
 - Children will be allocated a key worker who will remain attached throughout the outreach work and post-respite break
 - Speech and language, psychological and police (prevent criminalisation) support will also take place here
- 9.5 Assessment Unit:
- Will comprise of 1 emergency and 3 assessment beds for a period of up to 12 weeks, integrated with key workers as above.
 - This will reduce the number of out-of-area placements, improve initial assessment and planning and will help retain connections with family and community.
- 9.6 There will be better decisions and oversight of support for the child/young person, with a clear focus on stepping down cases safely. This makes the children/young people involved less likely to remain in expensive, out of area placements and more likely to be supported through fostering placements.
- 9.7 Current estimates of the cost of implementing Positive Futures will be £560,000 and input from Estates, HR, Finance, Workforce Development and project management is essential for implementing the model.
- 9.8 The medium-term impact will be a reduction in the need for higher-tier/statutory interventions, including admissions into care. It will also mean increased step-down, reduced step-up and a reduction in repeat referrals. This will particularly reduce the number of children aged 11 and over entering care.

10. PROJECT 6: FOSTERING SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

- 10.1 The fostering service improvement plan looks to increase the number of foster carers in Tameside through a new model tailored to the current demand, including the varying demographics of the LAC cohort. It aims to increase the number of children with more complex needs who can be fostered in Tameside, instead of having to be moved out of borough or into the independent sector in order to have their needs met.
- 10.2 It will also bring in an enhanced payment and support model for carers. A new recruitment and retention model will be introduced, including targeted recruitment for specialist foster carers. The plan will also set out how we will address barriers to fostering from other angles – for example recognising foster-friendly businesses.
- 10.3 Under the plan, out-of-hours support from the Family Intervention Service (Project 2) including weekends will be made available, as well as creating access pathways to the Positive Futures model (Project 5) to stabilise existing fostering placements.
- 10.4 Finally a bid for Lottery funding is planned to introduce the Step Up/Step Down fostering model and we will explore options for a Greater Manchester collaboration on the Mockingbird fostering model as well.
- 10.3 An estimated investment of £150,000 is required to implement the improvements. Support from the Communications Team is also needed, particularly with foster carer recruitment campaigns.
- 10.4 The expected impact that this project will have is that we will increase the number of Tameside carers to allow Tameside children to remain in the area, including those with more complex needs. The model also supports the delivery of LAC placement sufficiency (see project no. 7 below).

11. PROJECT 7: PLACEMENTS REVIEW & LAC SUFFICIENCY

- 11.1 This project involves the review of all current placements by the end of 2019 to ensure that all of our Looked After Children are in the right placement, at the lowest possible cost and shortest amount of time.
- 11.2 This will be carried out by a multi-agency panel, who will look at all cases with a view to move them to permanence (for example exploring Special Guardianship Orders). They will also address any existing issues with cases such as drift and delay, and allocate Personal Advisers to young people earlier.
- 11.3 Additional business support will support the multi-agency panel with decision-making, official minutes and ensure that actions are followed up.
- 11.4 Our Placement Sufficiency Plan will be implemented, supporting improved strategic commissioning, placement procurement and brokerage, managed market, quality assurance and contract management both locally and GM wide.
- 11.5 An estimated investment of £630,000 is required to implement this project. This investment includes introducing additional Business Support Capacity.
- 11.6 The intended impact of this review will be a medium-term reduction in the need for residential placements for Looked After Children. This will bring us more in line with our statistical neighbours in terms of placement make-up. It will improve the matching of placements to children's needs. It will increase the availability of step-down placement

options. Quality Assurance of cases will reduce readmission and future long-term costs. Finally it will contribute to reducing the number of Looked After Children in Tameside.

12. TIMELINE AND IMPACT

- 12.1 Impact on the Looked After population and associated spend will be achieved by the cumulative impact of the above measures in terms of the overall number of LAC, demographic of the LAC cohort, placement mix and time spent in care.
- 12.2 Projections based on the current 710 number suggest that doing nothing will lead to 784 LAC by September 2020. It is anticipated that implementation of the 7 projects in addition to the range of activity already in place will reduce this projection to 748 by September 2020. Whilst exact predictions are difficult to make given the number of variables, success will be measured by the cumulative impact of these measures on Looked After numbers and placement mix.
- 12.3 We would therefore aim to:
- Reduce the Looked After population to 650 by April 2021
 - Reduce the proportion of residential placements from 16% to 13% by October 2020

13. RECOMMENDATION

As set out at the front of the report