

Draft Business Cases for Children & Young People Committee

This appendix includes the outline business cases for the following proposed investments and savings for this committee that total over £500k:

Business Case Title	Category	Total Amount £000
Free School Meals holiday voucher scheme	Investment	3,000
Children's Residential Strategy	Invest to save	-£1,296
Social Care & Education Transport	Savings	-£753
Children in Care Placements	Pressures, investment and savings	£1,850

Free school meals – holiday voucher scheme

Proposal Title (Business Plan Description):	Free school meals - Cambridgeshire Holiday Voucher Scheme		
<u>Relevant Ambition(s)</u>	Ambitions 3, 4, 5, 7		
Directorate:	Children, Education and Families		
Service:	Education		
Type:	Investment		
Recurrent or One Off:	One off (across two payments)		
BP Reference No:	A/R.5.003 A/R.5.004		
Date:	1.12.23	Version	1

Proposal Summary

Summary / details of Proposal:

We have successfully operated a direct voucher scheme for any child eligible for free school meals, plus pre-school children who qualify via other specific schemes during the holiday periods from December 2020 and currently have funding in place until February 2024. The majority of the scheme has been funded by the Household Support Fund (and predecessor grants). The Fund is intended to cover a wide range of low-income households in need, including families with children of all ages, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers and disabled people.

Around 50% of the fund has been targeted and provides access to a supermarket voucher. We have provided these to eligible pupils over the six school holidays during the academic year. The scheme will continue to support those children aged 2 to 19 who meet our low-income criteria – typically those families accessing universal credit earning less than £7,400. The eligibility criteria we have applied remains the same:

- Funded Childcare and Education for 2-year-olds under the income-based criteria (children aged 2)
- Early Years Pupil Premium under the income-based criteria (children aged 3 and 4)
- Free School Meals (children and young people aged 4 to 16)
- Students in Sixth Forms eligible for Free School meals or for the 16+ bursary (young people aged 16 to 19).






In previous rounds, we funded all children in our schools regardless of where they live. In each round, and in line with the national scheme, we set an upper age limit of up to 19 on the day the vouchers are set. We allow claims from eligible students up to 25 if they have an education, health and care plan and are accessing education.

The scheme will run alongside our Holiday Activity and Food Scheme (operating at Easter, Summer and Christmas) and parents can access both schemes.

At this time, the future of the Household Support Grant is uncertain, so core funding has been identified to continue the scheme across the medium-term financial planning cycle. The £3m will mean that annually 22,000 eligible children will receive up to £135 over the 6 holidays of the academic year. We will provide a supermarket voucher which will allow parents to select one of 11 supermarkets.

In October, we undertook a survey of parents who have accessed the scheme. We had 537 responses, and the key headlines are below:

2. On a scale of 1 – 5 (5 being strongly agree and 1 being strongly disagree), the Cambridgeshire Holiday Voucher Scheme has helped my family with the cost of living crisis.

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	1 - Strongly Disagree		5.40%	29
2	2 - Disagree		0.93%	5
3	3 - Neither Agree or Disagree		7.45%	40
4	4 - Agree		21.04%	113
5	5 - Strong Agree		65.18%	350

Quotes received included -

- The supermarket vouchers have been a life saver!
- It makes such a big difference to know I can feed the children healthy food in holiday time, without this help I don't know how I would manage.
- These vouchers really help put food on the table are much needed thank you.
- By having help with the vouchers so I can buy fresh food and make healthier meals.
- It's massively helped with our grocery bill. One of my sons has coeliacs disease and the cost of gluten free food is extortionate. This has helped with the cost of his food.
- It has helped tremendously!! I cannot express how much the scheme has helped the past few years! It makes sure my kids have healthy and enough to eat during the holidays without giving the bare minimum food then starving myself to feed them.
- We went through being homeless with a new baby so really helped a lot.
- Some parents, including ourselves, have come to have to rely on the voucher schemes since they began, now more than ever families need extra support to ensure their children don't have to suffer in poverty.
- It will be such a shame if it comes to an end.
- FSM (free school meals) is sometimes the first and only meal my child has during the week, and the supermarket voucher is a lifeline to ensure I can get the extra food required for the week when he is at home.
- This is the best thing the government has ever done for families especially during summer holidays.

Has an EqIA been completed?	Yes
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Proposed Start Date:	April 2024
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Summary Business Plan Revenue Financial Information
(Business Plan Format £000):

Type	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Investment		3,000				
Investment		-1,500		1,500		
Total						

Capital link

Is there a linked capital proposal?	No
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Proposal benefits and impacts

Benefit < List the benefits that will be realised as a result of this Business Case. Include financial, non-financial and dis-benefits.>	<i>Which ambition does it contribute towards? Select which ambition this contributes towards or if it is enabling, put 'enabler' e.g Ambition 4</i>	Measurement & Evaluation <How will you measure the benefits? Will there be internal or external evaluation – by who and when>
Families are supported against the cost-of-living crisis and rising bills.	Ambition 5 - Helping people out of poverty and income inequality	Survey undertaken in October 2024 reflecting the feedback received in October 2023
Children are fed during the school holidays	Ambition 7 - Children and young people have opportunities to thrive.	Take up of vouchers and the increase in free school meal claims.

Type of impact	Details <i>Summarise any positive or negative impacts anticipated</i>
Environmental Impact	None
Social Impact	Positive - Less deprivation for families and ensuring children are fed whilst not at school.
Health Impact	Positive - Feedback from the October 2023 survey has shown that this funding enables more families to afford healthy eating including vegetables and fruit.

Children's Residential Strategy

Proposal Title (Business Plan Description):	Children's Residential Strategy		
<u>Relevant Ambition(s)</u>	Ambition 7		
Directorate:	Childrens, Education and Families		
Service:	Childrens Commissioning		
Type:	Saving		
Recurrent or One Off:	Recurrent		
BP Reference No:	A/R.5.002 A/R.6.011		
Date:	12/12/2023	Version	1

Proposal Summary

<p>Summary / details of Proposal:</p> <p>Locally and nationally, there is a growing complexity of need, alongside a lack of local capacity to respond to children and young people with complex needs in crisis which is significantly impacting in a number of ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of out of County placements. Often the Council can only find homes for children and young people outside of Cambridgeshire. This means that they are being placed a long way from their local connections and families. There is often limited choice in the homes available and this means that they are not always suitable as long-term arrangements. • Unregistered settings. Due to the lack of available local provision to meet the needs for some of our most complex young people, the Council needs to place a small number of children in homes that are not registered with Ofsted. These are short term arrangements whilst registered homes are found but it is a growing problem. These placements are often extremely expensive. • The Council is experiencing significant budget pressures. Demand is outstripping supply, and the cost of placements is consequently increasing year on year, and this also results in a compromised ability to forecast our budgetary needs accurately. Whilst there are a number of pressures on the placement budget, one of the primary cost drivers is due to the lack of residential placements and increased use of unregistered placements, and the associated steep cost increases. <p>In order to mitigate the above pressures in a long term and sustainable way, we are proposing a phased development of two residential children's homes (providing up to 4 placements), for direct access by Cambridgeshire County Council, for our children and young people in care.</p> <p>This will comprise 2 x solo/dual bed services, which will provide a short-term intervention service to assist young people who are in a period of crisis and to support them to move on effectively to a longer-term setting (e.g., residential children's home, foster care placement or</p>
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reunification back to their family home). The home will focus on providing a nurturing therapeutic environment for children with the most complex needs. Each of the dual bed/solo homes would provide a short-term (26 weeks) residential service, for up to two young people, in a period of crisis.

Progression of this option will enable the Council to deliver:

- Improved outcomes for children and young people and their families.
- To increase sufficiency within County for this identified group of children and young people.
- Ensure Cambridgeshire’s children in care remain in their local area accessing local services.
- To reduce the use of unregistered services for young people.
- To have provision that is for the primary use of Cambridgeshire children in care
- Greater control over local market provision and cost, to support delivery of a more sustainable budget position.

Has an EqlA been completed?	Not at this stage. An EqlA will be completed following full options appraisal.
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Proposed Start Date:	Towards the end of 2025
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Summary Business Plan Revenue Financial Information (Business Plan Format £000):

Type	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Investment		546	1,365	273		
Saving		-435	-2,175	-870		
Choose an item.						
Choose an item.						
Total		111	-810	-597		

Capital link

Is there a linked capital proposal?	Yes
If so, what is the reference no.?	A/C.11.005
Investment year(s)	2024/25 over 3 years
Investment Amount	£3.6m currently in capital business plan, but this is being re-costed to match revised project scope.
Funding Source	Prudential Borrowing

Proposal benefits and impacts

Benefit <i>< List the benefits that will be realised as a result of this Business Case. Include financial, non-financial and dis-benefits.></i>	<i>Which ambition does it contribute towards? Select which ambition this contributes towards or if it is enabling, put 'enabler' e.g Ambition 4</i>	Measurement & Evaluation <i><How will you measure the benefits? Will there be internal or external evaluation – by who and when></i>
Increased sufficiency for residential care within the county for Cambridgeshire's children in care	Ambition 4	Reduced use of unregistered placements Reduced number of out of county placements
Greater market and price control	Ambition 4	More accurate budget forecasting. Reduced budgetary pressures.

Type of impact	Details <i>Summarise any positive or negative impacts anticipated</i>
Environmental Impact	Positive - Will contribute towards net zero carbon emissions through ensuring properties are selected with good energy efficiency measures. Reduction in the need for social workers to travel outside the county to support children elsewhere in the UK
Social Impact	Positive - Children and young people with complex needs will be supported in a period of crisis with short term targeted therapeutic support to enable the best social outcomes for them.
Health Impact	Positive - Children and young people with complex needs will be supported in a period of crisis with short term targeted therapeutic support to enable the best health outcomes for them.

Social Care & Education Transport

Proposal Title (Business Plan Description):	Social Care & Education Transport - Continuing Transformation Savings		
Relevant Ambition(s)	Ambitions 2, 7		
Directorate:	Children Education and Families (CEF)		
Service:	Home to School Transport		
Type:	Saving		
Recurrent or One Off:	One off		
BP Reference No:	A/R.6.005		
Date:	28.09.2023	Version	1.0

Proposal Summary

Summary / details of Proposal:			
<p>The purpose of the Passenger Transport Transformation (PTT) Programme is to combine and oversee all transport activity to ensure successful delivery of the outcomes set out in the Passenger Transport Transformation Strategy, inclusive of creating savings on existing Home to School Transport spend, which, for reference, were over budget to the following amounts in 22/23:</p>			
Budget Area	22/23 Budget	22/23 Actual	Variance
Transport Mainstream	9,748,842	10,480,053	731,211
Transport Special	17,744,352	19,645,827	1,901,475
Transport Children in Care	1,629,623	2,122,063	492,440
Passenger Transport	29,122,817	32,247,943	3,125,126
<p>The PTT Programme has several workstreams which are attempting to produce savings as well as benefits to users by encouraging independent or active travel solutions where possible, including the following activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of High-Cost Single Routes (SEND) - Children moved to shared travel where possible • Clean Sheet Reviews - Optimisation of high-volume routes to ensure best value • Management of Transport Decision Making Through Policy <p>This proposal reflects the savings profiling for the programme, as agreed by the Rapid Implementation Team (RIT) in November 2022.</p>			

Has an EqIA been completed?	Not at this stage. An EqIA will be completed, where required, on completion of business cases for individual savings projects when the full detail of the proposal has been worked up
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Proposed Start Date:	April 2024
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Summary Business Plan Revenue Financial Information
(Business Plan Format £000):

Type	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Saving		-582	-171			
Choose an item.						
Choose an item.						
Choose an item.						
Total		-582	-171			

Capital link

Is there a linked capital proposal?	No
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Proposal benefits and impacts

Benefit <i>< List the benefits that will be realised as a result of this Business Case. Include financial, non-financial and dis-benefits.></i>	<i>Which ambition does it contribute towards? Select which ambition this contributes towards or if it is enabling, put 'enabler' e.g Ambition 4</i>	Measurement & Evaluation <i><How will you measure the benefits? Will there be internal or external evaluation – by who and when></i>
Reduction in costs	Ambition 2	Internal evaluation, monthly tracking of savings generated.
Increase in sustainable travel	Ambition 2	Internal evaluation at the end of a project initiative within the strategy. For example, measurement of numbers of children walking to school before and after safer walking route implementation.
Increased independent travel	Ambition 7	Internal evaluation at the end of a project initiative within the strategy. For example, measurement of numbers of children independently traveling before and after implementation of policy changes.

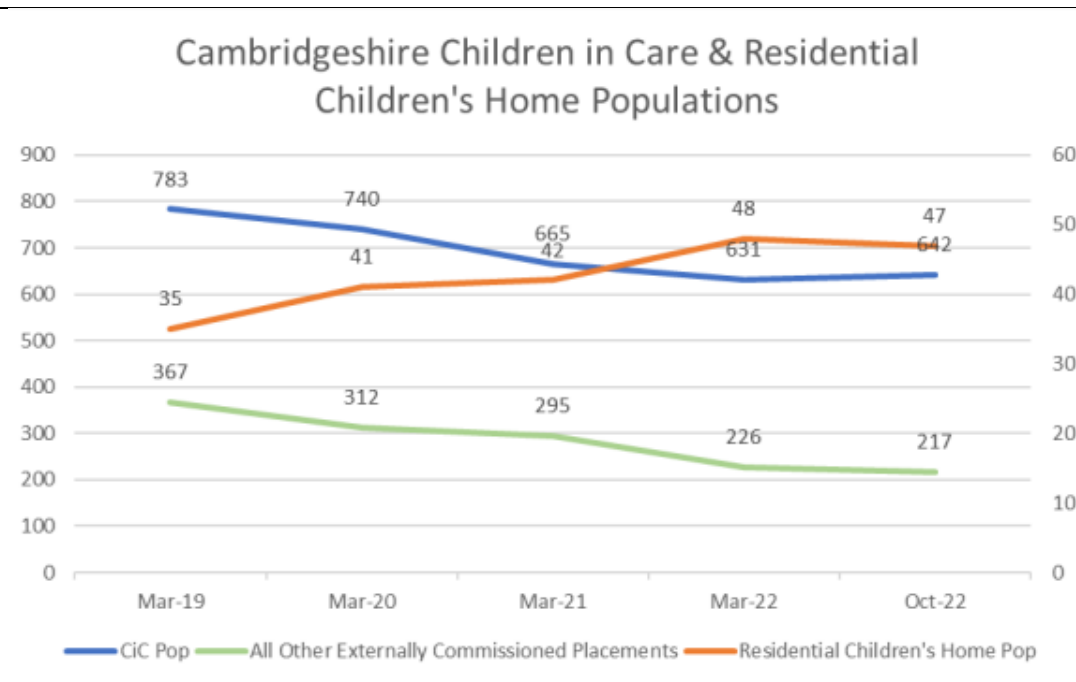
Type of impact	Details <i>Summarise any positive or negative impacts anticipated</i>
Environmental Impact	Positive - The entire strategy and all activity undertaken as a result aims to improve travel to school for our children and young people, promoting sustainable methods of transport at every opportunity.
Social Impact	Positive - The entire strategy and all activity undertaken as a result aims to improve independent travel to school for our children and young people, promoting independence and improving outcomes into adulthood.
Health Impact	Positive - The entire strategy and all activity undertaken as a result aims to improve independent travel to school for our children and young people which in turn has a positive impact on health outcomes for children and young people.

Children in Care Placements

Proposal Title (Business Plan Description):	Children in Care Placements: Budget Pressure and Savings		
<u>Relevant Ambition(s)</u>	Ambition 7		
Directorate:	Children, Education & Families		
Service:	Commissioning (Childrens)		
Type:	Pressure		
Recurrent or One Off:	Recurrent		
BP Reference No:	A/R.4.011, A/R.4.012, A/R.6.007, A/R.6.008		
Date:	27/11/2023	Version	1

Proposal Summary

<p>Summary / details of Proposal:</p> <p>Overview</p> <p>The children in care placement budget covers the cost of providing care for children across a range of settings, including for example residential, independent fostering placements, secure welfare and supported accommodation. This is a statutory service provision to ensure children and young people in care have placements funded to meet their assessed needs.</p> <p>This business case seeks to address the current budget pressures faced by the service in the immediate short-term, alongside the transformation work being undertaken to mitigate these pressures and deliver associated savings on the placement budget.</p> <p>Budget Pressure</p> <p>This proposal addresses the significant immediate pressures faced by the service in securing safe and appropriate placements for our children in care population. In line with national trends, Cambridgeshire is experiencing an increase in the number of Children in Care with complex needs requiring residential and bespoke placements. This is despite an overall decrease in Cambridgeshire's children in care population, indicating increasing complexity of needs amongst our children and young people in care. We have seen steady growth in demand for residential placements and this has continued into 2023/24, as the graph shows:</p>
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More recently, we are experiencing challenges in identifying homes that can safely support children with conflicting or varied needs, e.g., mental health, risk of self-harm, child sexual exploitation or criminal exploitation/gang involvement. These needs often require therapeutic crisis placements in small homes where intensive intervention and rehabilitation work can be undertaken over a focused period of time. The lack of this local sufficiency is leading to an increased use of more costly out of area or unregistered placements.

Based on the current placement budget commitments, this equates to a forecast pressure of £3.1m for 2024/25. We have therefore requested an investment of £3.1m in the Children in Care External Placements budget to address this current pressure which will be funded from reserves funding in 2024/25.

Transformation Savings

Following a deep dive review of the Children in Care budget, a number of opportunities have been identified to support delivery of the following savings in 2024/25:

- £1m: reduction in external children in care placement budget spend through a review of high-cost placements, with a focus on step-down provision when appropriate.
- £250k: negotiations with external providers to reduce costs, with a focus on step-down provision.

A number of existing steps have been undertaken to mitigate budget pressure in-year. This includes:

- Establishment of a weekly placement panel to review all high-cost placements.

- Step down of children in secure welfare units: targeted approach to support step down of secure welfare placements to support the young person to move on where ready to do so.
- Targeted review of all children in residential care over 12 years of age to identify appropriate opportunities to return to a foster care home.
- Review opportunities to progress independence where appropriate for 17-year-olds in semi-independent units.
- Placement support – investment in training and practice models to support social workers and foster carers in working with challenging and complex behaviour, alongside developing a programme to recruit emergency foster carers.

In addition to the existing mitigations being undertaken, this business case recognises that there are medium to long term interventions required to shape the market to ensure we have the required capacity to meet demand for local Cambridgeshire children and young people and we are looking to address this through some of our wider strategies, such as the Residential care Strategy and development of in-house fostering services. Savings contained within this business case will be delivered through a targeted approach, focusing on an immediate short-term impact to ensure benefits realisation in 2024/25. To deliver this, we intend to focus on the following areas:

- Improved market management arrangements with providers to provide more cost-effective and quality placements.
- Reviewing current Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) framework and other provider frameworks to ensure efficiencies and capacity are maximised.
- To review and recommend a small number of formal contractual arrangements with local providers to meet need more effectively. This may for example, include looking at block contract arrangements with some providers to ensure quality capacity to meet demand in line with the Council's constitution.
- Continue to review high costs placements through panel processes to review costs, timings and types of provision recommended to ensure both value for money and effective outcomes for children and young people.
- Review costs that are met between health, social care and education and ensure these are being accurately planned and resourced.

Has an [EqIA](#) been completed?

N/A

Proposed Start Date:

December 2023

Summary Business Plan Revenue Financial Information
(Business Plan Format £000):

Type	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Pressure		3,100				
Investment (Reserves funding)		-3,100	3,100			
Saving		-1,000				
Saving		-250				
Total		-1,250	3,100			

Capital link

Is there a linked capital proposal?	No
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Proposal benefits and impacts

Benefit < List the benefits that will be realised as a result of this Business Case. Include financial, non-financial and dis-benefits.>	Which ambition does it contribute towards? Select which ambition this contributes towards or if it is enabling, put 'enabler' e.g Ambition 4	Measurement & Evaluation <How will you measure the benefits? Will there be internal or external evaluation – by who and when>
Better use of financial resources.	Ambition 7	We will be monitoring the savings identified in this business plan and sufficiency action plan to ensure savings are monitored, reviewed and implemented.
Providing better quality and local services to children we care for.	Ambition 7	We will be reviewing the stability of placements, feedback from children in care, Social Workers, Placements Officers and Independent Reviewing Officers around quality of provision.
Improved opportunities for local providers to work as part of our local network.	Ambition 7	Ensure that there is a high attendance rate from providers to market events. Positive feedback from

		providers around engagement events.
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Type of impact	Details <i>Summarise any positive or negative impacts anticipated</i>
Environmental Impact	Positive – reduced travel & carbon emissions The development of more local provision will reduce long distance travel arrangements for children and by professionals visiting them. It will also support children and their carers to use more local transport.
Social Impact	Positive - Providing opportunities for residents to be part of our local offer to children and young people we care for by developing more local provision via expansion in residential provision, as well as increasing local foster carers.
Health Impact	Positive - Providing support for children closer to their local community and network. Being able to access local health and community services in preparation for adulthood.