

Appendix 2a

Children and Young People Committee

Savings Proposals

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Business Planning: Business Case – Savings proposal

Project Title: Children in Care Placement Costs

Committee: Children and Young People
Committee

2022-23 Savings: £600k savings

Brief Description of proposal:

Placement budgets for meeting the cost of externally provided placements for children and young people in care are adjusted annually to allow for both demand growth and the impact of inflation. These changes are built into the budget. After taking these changes into account, it is possible to deliver a saving of in excess of £600k, through the re-baselining of placement budgets within children's services and by removing an historical investment item.

Date of version: 22 October 2021 BP Reference: A/R.6.255

Business Leads / Sponsors: Lou Williams

1. Please describe what the proposed outcomes are:

Children and young people in care access a variety of different types of care placements according to their assessed needs and their age. These placements include:

- In-house foster care;
- Kinship care, where children in care are placed with relatives or others who know the child well, who are approved as foster carers for the specific child or children only;
- Foster care provided by an Independent Fostering Agency;
- Residential care;
- Supported accommodation, which is available for young people aged 16 and 17.

Younger children and those with fewer needs are most likely to be placed with foster carers. Older young people, and those who may have significant emotional health needs and/or present with difficult and challenging behaviours are more likely to need a residential placement.

Some young people aged 16 and 17 make very good progress within semi-independent provision. In some cases, this kind of accommodation can provide an appropriate step-down from residential provision as part of the journey towards fully independent living. In others, it may be that a young person newly entering care at 16 or 17 is most likely to do well in this kind of provision.

In Cambridgeshire, the make up of our population of children in care has changed as overall numbers have reduced and the Family Safeguarding model of practice has become established. This has meant that we now have proportionately fewer younger children in our care.

This general trend towards our care population being older and/or having more complex needs has resulted in an increase in the use of residential placements and higher cost, more specialist fostering and semi-independent placements. There is also less demand for placements that have historically been most likely to have been provided by our in-house foster carers who specialise in placements for babies and very young children. Our Family Safeguarding model is much better at supporting parents of younger children to make sustainable changes in their lives that enable them to provide the stable and loving homes that their children need, meaning that we have fewer babies and young children in our care now than was the case even two years ago.

Alongside these changes, the costs of residential placements in particular, but also of the most specialist independent foster placements, has increased rapidly over the last 24 months, as the number of placements available has failed to keep up with demand. This is why we have seen an increase in overall placement costs in the current financial year despite overall numbers of children and young people in care continuing to decline.

More positively, we have been taking focused action to improve the quality and consistency of care planning for children and young people in care over the current financial year. While this meant that for a few young people, a move to more specialist (and higher cost) placements was needed after reassessing their needs, the overall position has been a significant reduction in the number of placements that are coming to an end in unplanned ways. This is clearly better for our children in care, but it is also better from a financial perspective, since it is those placements that need to be identified in an emergency after the breakdown of the previous placement that are almost always the most expensive.

Taking these changes together, we have re-baselined the budgets associated with all placements for children and young people in care, while modelling the likely demand for placements over the next financial year. Allowing for some headroom for continued increases in unit placement costs in 2022/3, this work indicates that the continued slow reduction in overall numbers and the impact of greater placement stability over the current financial year enables a saving of £600k to be made across budgets for children and young people in care.

We have also taken the decision to reverse a planned investment into flexible shared care, which amounts to a further saving of £174k. This type of care is sometimes thought to be of benefit where families are struggling to manage the challenging behaviour of one or more of their (usually teenage) children. There are, however, a number of difficulties with such an approach including that it is often very difficult to secure the permanent return home to family of the child in question once a service like this has been offered.

2. What evidence has been used to support this work, how does this link to any existing strategies/policies?

The reduction in numbers of children and young people in care is the direct result of the implementation and embedding of Family Safeguarding in Cambridgeshire.

Our fostering strategy seeks not only to secure the continued recruitment of fostering households, but to continue to offer the training and support to enable our carers to offer more placements to older children and young people with more complex needs, in line with our changing population of children in care.

Estimates of overall likely demand for placements next year are based on experience over the last two years, which is the period during which the profile of our care population has changed and the pressures in placement availability have become most pronounced.

3. Has an options and feasibility study been undertaken? Please explain what options have been considered.

No - this would not be relevant in relation to this issue.

4. What are the next steps/ actions the Council should take to pursue it? Please include timescales.

High Level Timetable

Task	Start Date	End Date	Overall Responsibility
Apply savings and associated re-baselining	1 st April 2022	N/A	Lou Williams/Martin Wade Finance

The ability to offer this saving from core budgets is the result of increased levels of government grant. No additional steps or actions are required.

5. Could this have any effects on people with Protected Characteristics including poverty and rural isolation? If so please provide as much detail as possible.

There is no change to service delivery and children and young people in care will continue to be placed in placements that are in line with their age and assessed needs. However, an Equality Impact Assessment will be developed to ensure we mitigate against any potential diverse risks.

6. What financial and non-financial benefits are there and how will you measure the performance of these? Are there any dis-benefits? These MUST include how this will benefit the wider internal and external system.

Financial Benefits

Achievement of £600k savings as described above.

Non-Financial Benefits

No change; we will seek to continue to identify placements for children and young people in care that are in line with their assessed needs.

7. Are there any identified risks which may impact on the potential delivery of this? What is the risk if we do not act?

Budgets associated with children and young people in care are highly volatile. Placement numbers and mix can change in response to the recognition of new risks facing children and young people. An example is that of the recognition of the exploitation of young people through county lines over recent years. This recognition

resulted in some young people accessing care placements because of the level of risks they were facing.

Some types of placement costs are very high and so even a small increase in the numbers of young people requiring such placements can have a significant budgetary impact. For example, a welfare secure placement can cost around £10k per week.

Risk	Mitigation	RAG (should the risk occur)	Overall Responsibility
Continued increase in the unit cost of residential placements	Some headroom built into budget for 2022/3; Commissioning colleagues continue to seek value for money placements.	Amber	Lou Williams
Increase in overall numbers of children and young people in care	Continued embedding of the Family Safeguarding approach	Amber	Lou Williams
Increased demand for highest cost most specialist placements	Continued improvement in care planning processes	Amber	Lou Williams

8. Scope: What is within scope? What is outside of scope?

This business case is solely related to placements for children and young people in care.

Business Planning: Business Case - Savings proposal

Project Title: Reduction in Special Guardianship Order allowance budgets

Committee: Children and Young People Committee

2022-23 Savings amount: £250k savings

Brief Description of proposal:

Because of the reduction in care proceedings as a result of the 2019 restructure and implementation of Family Safeguarding, the budget for payment of allowances for Special Guardianship Order arrangements is consistently underspent. This offers the opportunity to offer a saving with no impact on users of the service.

Date of version: 9 Sept 2021

BP Reference: A/R.6.257

Business Leads / Sponsors:

Lou Williams, Director of Children's Services

1. Please describe what the proposed outcomes are:

Special Guardianship Order allowances are paid to the permanent carers of children who would otherwise be in care. Generally speaking, these carers are close family members (aunts/uncles, grandparents etc.) of the child concerned.

Arrangements for providing allowances to carers of children under a Special Guardianship Order are covered by statutory guidance. Not all those who have a Special Guardianship Order in respect of a child are eligible for financial assistance. Those who are eligible for an allowance may only be eligible subject to an assessment of financial means, or may be eligible for a non-means tested allowance for a period (usually two years) from the making of the order, after which a means test applies. Allowances automatically cease at age 18 or when the child no longer lives with the carer/relative.

The decision about whether to make a Special Guardianship Order lies with the courts and forms part of the consideration of an appropriate order in care proceedings. Special Guardianship Orders provide a good outcome for many children, enabling them to live in a permanent family arrangement with relatives who share parental responsibility with the parent outside of the care system.

Special Guardianship Orders therefore contribute to the Cambridgeshire County Council outcomes of helping our children learn, develop and live life to the full and protecting and caring for those who need us.

This is a demand-led budget; underspends have arisen because we have been successful in reducing the number of children coming into care following the extensive restructure of the service in 2018/19 which dramatically increased management oversight. This reduction has continued through the use of our Family Safeguarding model, which enables more children to safely remain in the care of their birth parents, and which was launched in March 2020.

We expect this reduction in numbers in care to be permanent. Should this not be the case, the number of Special Guardianship Order arrangements would be likely to increase, placing pressure on the associated allowance budgets.

2. What evidence has been used to support this work, how does this link to any existing strategies/policies?

The Family Safeguarding approach involves the secondment of adult facing practitioners into the children's social work teams who work with children in need and children in need of protection. These adult-facing practitioners work with the parents to enable them to address the issues that they are facing, and which are impacting on their ability to provide safe, stable and loving homes. The specialisms that the adult practitioners work within are:

- Substance and problematic alcohol misuse;
- Domestic abuse, and;
- Mental and emotional ill-health.

These parental issues are common factors that result in a high risk of children coming into the care system if they remain unresolved.

Our statutory duties include providing services and support to families to reduce the likelihood of children needing to come into care. The evidence base for the effectiveness of the Family Safeguarding model has grown since it was initially developed in Hertfordshire in 2016/17, and then piloted in four other local authorities including Peterborough. The model is currently funded in Cambridgeshire as part of the DfE Stronger Families, Protecting Children programme, for which Cambridgeshire County Council is a trailblazer authority.

The table below evidences the reduction in the number of care proceedings between 2017/18 and the year ending 31 March 2020, the most recent data available. The table shows the rate of care applications per 10,000 children and young people aged 0-18: ¹

Statistical Neighbours

		2017	2018	2019	2020
919	Hertfordshire	6.50	6.00	5.30	5.20
869	West Berkshire	10.80	10.00	9.10	6.10
850	Hampshire	8.00	9.10	9.30	7.20
873	Cambridgeshire	12.00	11.10	10.30	8.00
865	Wiltshire	7.60	6.90	7.50	8.50
803	South Gloucestershire	7.10	7.20	8.50	9.20
931	Oxfordshire	11.10	9.40	11.00	10.10
800	Bath and North East Somerset	7.40	8.20	11.40	10.20
885	Worcestershire	12.90	11.80	10.20	10.80
938	West Sussex	9.40	9.50	8.50	11.00
916	Gloucestershire	9.50	8.00	11.30	11.20
	Statistical Neighbours	9.03	8.61	9.21	8.95
985	East of England	-	-	-	-
970	England	12.30	11.90	11.30	10.80

Special Guardianship Order arrangements where carers are entitled to a financial allowance almost always arise as a result of care proceedings; the reduction in care proceedings is the reason for the reduced demand on the Special Guardianship Order allowance budget.

¹ Source for table is the Local Authority Interactive Tool [LAIT]: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait>

3. Has an options and feasibility study been undertaken? Please explain what options have been considered.

N/A: The reduced demand has led to the underspend.

4. What are the next steps/ actions the Council should take to pursue it? Please include timescales.

The reduction in demand for Special Guardianship Order allowances is the result of improved support to families facing some of the most complex difficulties.

High Level Timetable

Task	Start Date	End Date	Overall Responsibility
Apply budget reduction	1 st April 2022	N/A	Lou Williams/Roger Brett/Finance

5. Could this have any effects on people with Protected Characteristics including poverty and rural isolation? If so please provide as much detail as possible.

Special Guardianship Order allowance budgets are demand-led and payments of allowances are dictated by statutory guidance. There is no discretion in relation to who does or does not qualify for a Special Guardianship Order allowance. An Equality Impact Assessment will be developed to ensure that we mitigate against any potential adverse impacts on protected groups.

6. What financial and non-financial benefits are there and how will you measure the performance of these? Are there any dis-benefits? These MUST include how this will benefit the wider internal and external system.

Financial Benefits

The reduction in care proceedings as a result of the structural changes made in children's services in 2018/19 and together with the subsequent adoption of Family Safeguarding have resulted in a reduced demand for Special Guardianship Order allowances, and a consistent underspend in the associated budget. This enables a budget reduction and saving of £250K per annum from 2022/23.

Non-Financial Benefits

Children do best when supported to safely remain within their immediate birth families. Family Safeguarding enables parents to make the sustainable changes to enable them to provide the stable and loving homes that children need.

Key Benefit	Measure	Baseline	Target & Timescale
Rate of children in care per 10,000 remains at or below average of statistical neighbours	Rate of children per 10,000	49 per 10,000 [average of statistical neighbours as of March 31 st 2020 ²	47 per 10,000 March 2023

7. Are there any identified risks which may impact on the potential delivery of this? What is the risk if we do not act?

The main risk is that care proceedings and the number of children in care begin to increase, potentially as a result of the increased pressures that families have experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

It should, however, be noted that numbers of proceedings and children in care in Cambridgeshire were significantly above the average of our statistical neighbours in previous financial years, which will mitigate the impact of COVID-19 since the reduction is from a higher than anticipated level, as opposed to being from a level that was already in line or below that of similar authorities.

Risk	Mitigation	RAG (should the risk occur)	Overall Responsibility
Increase in care applications	Continued embedding of Family Safeguarding model	Amber	Lou Williams

8. Scope: What is within scope? What is outside of scope?

The budget for Special Guardianship Order allowances to be reduced by a level that is consistent with underspends and reduced demand.

Special Guardianship Order carers will continue to receive allowances to which they are entitled. Special Guardianship Order carers are also entitled to support (as are adoptive

² The statistical neighbour group for Cambridgeshire changed during 2020/21 resulting in a revised statistical neighbour average of 51.6 as of March 31st 2020. For consistency in this financial year, the original SN average continues to be used. The change in the SN rate will not affect our targets.

carers) to help them to address any difficulties they may be experiencing in providing a permanent home to the child. This non-financial support is not affected by these changes.

Business Planning: Business Case - Savings proposal

Project Title: Programme of work to deliver savings in Social and Education Transport

Committee: Children and Young People Committee

2022-23 Savings amount: £380k

2022-23 Investment amount: £161k

Date of version: 8 November 2021

BP Reference: A/R.6.268

Business Leads / Sponsors: Hazel Belchamber/Clare Buckingham

Revenue Financial Breakdown						
Shown in recurrent, business plan format						
	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	Separate funding source available?
Permanent Savings	-£380	-570k	-345k			
Permanent Pressure / Investment						
Temporary Pressure / Investment	161k	161k	161k			

1. Please describe what the proposed outcomes are:

This proposal supports the following County Council outcomes for Cambridgeshire:

Helping our children learn, develop and live life to the full:

A number of the discretionary elements, within the Council's Home to School Travel Assistance Policy, help support and provide continuity for the County's most vulnerable children/young people, and those families with the lowest incomes.

Developing and supporting children and young people to enable them to share transport, including using public transport, will provide them with essential life skills.

Cambridgeshire: A well-connected, safe, clean, green environment:

All schools must have a Travel Plan which promotes sustainable transport choices and encourages families to plan their journeys and builds/strengthens links with the local community. Plans are written with teachers, parents, students, governors and the local community. The workstreams identified in this Business Case provide the opportunity to reinforce the importance of these Travel Plans and reduce journey times for children and young people. Fewer single occupancy taxi journeys and increased use of shared transport, including public transport, will reduce the number of vehicles required to get children to and from school and the associated emissions and carbon impact of those journeys.

Background information

The Social Education Transport Team (SETT) is experiencing significant increases in demand for transport services, especially for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

The total budget for Social and Education Transport (mainstream, SEND and Children in Care) has increased by almost 50% from £18.4m in 2018/19 to £26.96m in the current financial year. Within this total, the budget for mainstream school transport has risen by 16%, but the budget for SEND transport has risen by more than 90%, reflecting the intense pressure on this area of service. This increase reflects rising numbers of pupils with SEND, greater complexity of needs (especially Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Social Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH), more diverse placements (including to out county provision, and a greater number of bespoke/individual timetables), parental expectations as well as operational transport pressures such as fuel increases and driver shortages.

Although only approximately 15% of those in receipt of school transport receive it because of their SEND, their transport accounts for 60% of overall spend. Transport

for all pupils with SEND is currently in excess of £6,300 per pupil p.a., compared to an average of £1,000-£1,500 for primary or secondary school pupils.

The trends in SEND transport are projected to continue, with an estimated 47% increase in the number of pupils with Education Health Care Plans (ECHPs) by 2031 (compared to 2020), with associated greater pressures for support for pupils with ASD, SEMH, and on specialist independent placements. If transport continues to be provided to approximately 60% of pupils with ECHPs, at today's unit costs, overall expenditure on SEND transport would be expected to rise from £16m to £26m.

Work is ongoing to address the continued pressure on costs, improve contract performance, streamline systems and processes and improve the overall outcomes for young people whilst ensuring best value for money.

The following projects are already underway:

- Review and replacement of IT software with an integrated transport system which will significantly reduce the manual handling of data;
- Implementation of a Dynamic Purchasing System across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, leading to improved contract management practices and providing greater flexibility to adapt to changing markets and suppliers (completed in September 2021);
- Implementation of a two-year Independent Travel Training pilot (commenced in September 2021).

In September 2021, the Children and Young People's Committee gave its approval to the following additional workstreams to deliver savings:

- a) Consultation on a review of the Council's discretionary policy of funding free transport to the After School Clubs, which are run by five of the County's Area Special Schools;
- b) A detailed review of routes currently deemed as unavailable (unsafe) for a child to walk to school, accompanied as necessary, by an adult;
- c) Adoption of criteria to inform future decisions on Parental Transport Budgets, in particular enhanced payment rates, in cases where to do so would result in a saving on the cost of Local Authority provided transport.

This business case is proposing that the following workstreams are delivered over the next three years in order to reduce both financial and operational pressures, achieve further savings and improve cost controls through a combination of operational efficiencies and improved demand management.

Workstream 1:

Review and re-tendering of routes serving special schools (routes to mainstream secondary and primary schools are not to be included in the scope)

Evidence (also see Workstream 2)

- Of the total expenditure for the home to school transport service, more than (60%) approximately £16m is accounted for by transport for pupils with SEND and EHCPs who are placed in specialist provision.
- Transport to the County's 11 special schools accounts for more than £8.7m expenditure for 1,400 pupils – equating to more than £6,200 per pupil p.a. (compared to the County's overall average for all pupils transported of less than £2,500).
- The remainder is spent on transporting nearly 300 pupils to specialist provision out of the County and >800 pupils to post-16 colleges or mainstream schools.
- Although home to school transport is provided to 255 schools, transport to just 16 of those schools in each case exceeds £0.5m p.a. and in three cases exceeds £1m p.a. An analysis of current contract costs has indicated that there are 15 special schools where a combination of high unit costs and a significant number of routes would indicate there is potential for route rationalisation and review. In total, these 13 schools account for almost £10m expenditure.

Proposal

- Whilst on-going route optimisation is undertaken by SETT as a matter of course, due to the level of change of needs/locations of pupils and complexity of SEND transport there is benefit in periodic “clean sheet” reviews of transport to the largest special schools where there is often greatest scope to replan networks to achieve greater efficiencies. This can ensure that spare capacity and “solo routes” are minimised. It can also ensure that pupils receive the most appropriate transport for their needs.
- It is proposed that such a series of reviews be undertaken over the next three years, working to a timetable which would ensure that new contracts can be in place in time for the start of the next new academic year. It is proposed that three schools be reviewed in year 1, and five each in years 2 and 3.

- Such reviews require highly developed negotiation, persuasion and communication skills. Local knowledge of schools, pupils, and suppliers, as well as familiarity with the recently procured QRoutes software would also be highly desirable. It is expected that 2 x FTE (Full Time Employee) P1 roles would be required to allow these reviews to be undertaken.
- A further additional 1 x FTE Scale 4 Business Support Officer to provide administrative support to the Contract Officer will also be required. It would be beneficial for this role to be made permanent given that there is only one Contracts Officer supporting a £20million contract with over 1000 routes per day.

Savings potential

A 10% saving for the three largest special schools being reviewed would generate estimated potential annual savings of £300,000 (less staff costs), with similar reviews being undertaken in subsequent years to realise a similar scale of savings.

Recurrent yearly savings from each of the school reviews are likely to diminish as routes change/new pupils are added or contracts renegotiated.

Risk

Medium: Review of SEND school transport inevitably involves considerable liaison with parent representatives (Pin Point), schools, SEND service colleagues and operators, requiring dedicated staff resource to undertake the initial preparatory work, route planning and retendering. Sufficient time needs to be allowed for this to ensure as smooth a transition as possible from the current to new transport arrangements.

Analysis of contract data has shown that there are more than 100 suppliers. On average each tender received 8 bids. There are, however, some risks related to the lack of potential competition in some areas, with more than 60 recent tenders receiving no bids. This will also involve some early termination of routes if all routes to schools are to be reviewed collectively. There is, therefore, an element of risk relating to the level of market competition and early proactive work with operators to generate interest, and some flexibility in approaches to procurement e.g. allowing combined/alternative bids will be necessary to help to mitigate such risks.

Workstream 2:

Review of solo routes to in-County special schools (this workstream will be combined with Workstream 1)

Evidence

- Although the number of pupils with SEND has been rising (40%), the increase in costs has been far in excess of the increase in the number of pupils.

- There are more than 100 routes to placements within the County carrying only one child, at a cost of more than £2m p.a. (the cost per child averaging £20,000 p.a).
- There are 15 in-County schools served by multiple routes that each have only one child carried at a cost of nearly £2m p.a, suggesting there is scope for rationalisation.

Proposal

- A review is undertaken this financial year with SEND service staff of each “solo route” in cases where there are multiple such routes serving one school. The 2 x FTE P1 posts identified for Workstream 1 would provide the capacity necessary for this review to be undertaken in liaison with the SEND service team.

Savings potential:

A conservative estimated 5% savings in solo routes to these 15 schools would realise an estimate £100,000 p.a. [Note that if the review of the large special schools’ transport in Workstream 1 was being undertaken, this would be expected to incorporate the review of solo routes to those schools, which would mean the saving for this stream of work should be revised to £25-50,000.]

Risk:

Low: There would be no withdrawal of transport or change of placement to existing pupils. This is an operational review of provision to ensure value for money and that transport remains appropriate to the child/young person’s needs.

Workstream 3:

Operational review and demand management to reduce out authority transport costs.

Evidence

In the last three years the largest increases in costs have been for pupils with SEND placed out of authority (increasing from £0.97m to £1.52m) - an increase of nearly 60% and exceeding the budget last year by nearly £300,000.

- Analysis of the current contract data indicates that transport to out-County placements is continuing to rise this year and that, as a result, costs will be expected to be close to £1.9m-2m.
- Transport is provided to 60 out-County schools/establishments for almost 100 pupils with SEND, at a cost of in excess of nearly £20,000 per pupil p.a. on average. Many of these are pupils travelling in taxis on their own.

- Sixteen routes to out-County placements have costs per pupil p.a. in excess of £25,000, and thirteen of the establishments account for nearly £1m of expenditure (for 40 routes).

Proposals

- It is proposed that a fundamental review of out-County transport for pupils with SEND be undertaken, commencing with the transport that is provided to the nearly 100 pupils travelling solo, and/or those out-County placements where unit costs are exceptionally high (e.g. in excess of £25,000 per pupil p.a.). This means reviewing transport requirements and, where necessary, consolidation of routes to remove spare capacity.
- Additional work should be undertaken to ensure the SEND service team are informed and fully aware of the potential costs of such placements over the education lifetime of the children concerned and that transport costs are considered alongside placement decisions, where a suitable school is closer and/or there is a more cost-effective transport option available and reviewed regularly.
- An additional 1FTE P1 would be required to undertake an initial review of all out-County placements/rationalisation, and then work in liaison with the SEND service team to ensure that future decisions on placement take full account of the transport implications, and that this area of transport expenditure is proactively monitored.

Savings potential:

A review of the exceptionally high cost out-County transport routes (£25,000 per pupil), and out-County establishments accounting for more than £50,000 annual expenditure would be expected to result in some short-term rationalisation of transport capacity, estimated at 5% of current out-County transport costs i.e. £100,000 pa.

Longer term an ongoing review of out-County placements would be expected to continue to manage demand and expenditure for these pupils. Achieving a further 10% reduction in the number of out-County placements would equate to a £120,000 p.a. [The cost of transport to an out-County placement = £9,300 compared to £6,200 to an in-County special school, saving £100-120,000 p.a. for approximately 30-35 pupils.]

Given projections are for more pupils to have ASD/SEMH needs over the coming years, and an increasing number to require independent placements, the improved management of transport demand to out-County placements will be necessary to contain significant upward pressure on the transport budget. High quality transport cost data for this group of pupils will also be critical to informing longer term business planning decisions relating to in-County school placement /capacity planning. This workstream is therefore seen as the highest priority area of work.

Risk:

Low: There would be no withdrawal of transport or change of placement to existing pupils. This is an operational review of provision to ensure value for money and that transport remains appropriate.

Workstream 4:

Recruitment of volunteer drivers, volunteer Passenger Assistants (PAs)

Evidence

- On-going dialogue by the SETT team with suppliers has indicated that there has been a reduction in the number of drivers available to deliver contracted work for the Council (all drivers need an Enhanced DBS check to work on Council-contracted school transport). This is reflected in the challenging market conditions where it is not uncommon for routes to be rejected on the basis that either drivers or Passenger Assistants (PAs) cannot be secured.
- There are more than 440 routes with PAs, and 11 operators supply nearly 300 of these. Currently daily contract rates do not separate the PA costs from the driver/vehicle cost.
- An exercise was recently undertaken to recruit volunteer drivers and of the 50 initial expressions of interest, 12 are now volunteer drivers. There was also an initiative to recruit volunteer drivers for transporting individuals for Covid tests, and this may have created more appetite for more permanent volunteer drivers.

Proposal

- Staff from the Business Improvement & Development (BID) Directorate are assigned to develop and deliver a pilot project to recruit volunteer drivers and to investigate opportunities to create a 'pool' of volunteer PAs, including looking at options for using staff within our own organisation. Depending on the results of the pilot, this will be rolled out to more routes, as a longer-term project.
- This work will also look at the terms and systems in place under which drivers and PAs are recruited and managed to ensure a more reliable service and greater certainty or flexibility for volunteers.
- SETT will need to identify the separate costs of vehicle/drivers and escorts for some routes, which could identify those routes which may benefit from the use of a volunteer PA rather than a contractor provided PA. This could also provide greater consistency of service for parents/pupils, where the PA will continue to travel on the route with the child/children even if the driver/contract changes. This may increase the attractiveness to bid for some routes as the operator would no longer be required to secure PAs for their routes.

Savings potential:

Pilot project to deliver £30k of savings in Year 1. This will involve intensive work on very specific areas/routes. Depending on the results of this, further savings may be delivered in future years as the project is rolled out more widely.

Risk:

Low, however it will be critical that the safety of the children and reliability of the service are placed front and centre of any volunteer initiatives.

Workstream 5

Fleet review: looking into fleet infrastructure (vehicles and depots) and potential for the fleet to work across multiple Council areas

- The fleet (although under the same transport manager as children's transport) currently provides services for adults' transport only. It comprises 27 vehicles, 3 of which are funded by care homes, and includes 8-15 seat minibuses and smaller 5-seater MPVs.
- A recent review has been undertaken of routes used to transport adults to day centres and further work is underway to explore greater efficiencies using the existing fleet.
- The Council has not recently explored synergies for having a fleet providing services across both Adults and Children.
- The market conditions for children's transport (particularly SEND) are extremely challenging. Entering the market with an internal fleet of vehicles, drivers and PAs could provide greater certainty over the Council's continued ability to meet its statutory duties to get children entitled to transport to and from school/college.
- The analysis of school transport contracts has illustrated that there have been a number of contracts tendered recently that have attracted little or no interest from the market. Use of the in-house fleet in such circumstances may be beneficial to maintain quality of service and contain costs.

Proposal

- To undertake a thorough and holistic analysis of the fleet across the organisation, splitting into three workstreams
 - Integrated transport unit (where education, children and adults transport are combined operationally)
 - Integrated fleet maintenance (assessment of all depots and buildings where fleets are maintained across service areas)

- Rationalising the service (undertaking analysis of fleet capacity and opportunities to maximise efficiency)
- This work is substantial and would require third party consultants, as well as backfilling service roles to allow for adequate time to be allocated to the project.

Savings potential:

It is likely that there could be significant savings in the longer term, however, more work is needed to explore this further to understand the scope for savings, and the implications for the current market.

Risks:

High. Investing in vehicles, drivers and PAs will be costly and the business case is likely to be based on the ability to secure business outside of school/core hours, which could involve competing with the market, which can be challenging with Council standards as well as staff pay and conditions.

2. What evidence has been used to support this work, how does this link to any existing strategies/policies?

In October 2021, an independent specialist consultant was appointed to undertake a high-level analysis of the costs of education transport by supplier, route, school and the basis on which transport had been awarded to highlight potential areas for saving.

The purpose of this work was to generate evidence to identify trends, provide understanding of the pressures, and areas for potential improvement (savings and cost reduction) and workstream areas that could be pursued in order for these opportunities to be realised.

The outcome of this work has been integrated into the evidence that has been used to support this business case.

3. Has an options and feasibility study been undertaken? Please explain what options have been considered.

As outlined in the Section 2, there is a significant amount of evidence that has been applied to inform the work areas that are outlined in this proposal. Other options that were evaluated but rejected are listed in the table below:

Potential Workstream	Decision
Review of mainstream school catchment areas across Cambridgeshire	This is complex and politically sensitive and will not tackle the high costs areas identified in this

	proposal, which are primarily the transport to special schools and out county placements.
Re-tendering of routes for secondary, primary schools	<p>Although more than two thirds of all pupils in receipt of home to school transport are attending secondary schools with 10% at primary school, the number of primary and secondary school pupils in receipt of transport has been falling in recent years.</p> <p>Currently unit costs for mainstream pupils are well managed, and due to the large networks into the secondary schools' contract rates are competitive and vehicles used to capacity.</p> <p>It is unlikely that significant savings could be realised from retendering these networks and there is limited scope for rationalisation of routes.</p>
<p>Re-negotiation of a proportion of commercial routes to deliver cost reduction</p> <p>A consultant undertook a light touch high level review of existing contract costs and extrapolated the minimum and average savings experienced in other areas to reach a potential savings range of £400k to £1.2m.</p> <p>A consultant would need to be employed to undertake further work at a cost of approximately £150k (no risk/reward) or £90-£105k with a 20-25% risk reward mechanism.</p>	<p>This work does have some potential risks as it involves terminating high-cost contracts and reprocurring these, which could result in costs increasing at a time when the Council is seeing unprecedented numbers of contracts being handed back.</p> <p>Information from a recent report does suggest the number of suppliers currently in place is relatively strong (although there are clearly some areas of the County where significant issues exist, and contracts are handed back).</p> <p>The analysis undertaken for this paper has highlighted that the cost pressures are focussed on SEND and out-County placements, and, therefore, a more targeted approach to route rationalisation and retendering is proposed.</p>
Review of admissions to mainstream and managing school placements, specifically for SEND schools	It is not legal to hold school places open in the expectation a child might require one following a house move, for example. There is also a legal limit on Infant Class Sizes (maximum of 30 children to a qualified teacher). It is difficult to predict number of families who might move into the county in-year and where they will choose to live. As such the ability for the Team to actually influence this is incredibly hard.

	<p>The Admissions Team will take a more proactive approach with regard to contacting parents in cases where children have been offered a place at a school which isn't their catchment or nearest school because it was full when a place at their catchment or nearest school becomes available.</p> <p>There is a separate project underway to increase the number of special school places in the County.</p>
<p>Changing the policy with regard to the entitlement to free transport for children aged 8-11 years</p>	<p>Cambridgeshire is one of the few Shire authorities that continues to use its discretion and provide home to school transport to pupils aged 8-11 years who live more than 3 miles from their nearest school. (The statutory entitlement distance is 3 miles for this age group).</p> <p>There are relatively few pupils who would no longer be entitled to free transport as it would still be necessary to provide free transport on many of the routes on the grounds of road safety. Other pupils would continue to qualify on grounds of low income.</p> <p>It is unlikely that the small number of pupils no longer travelling on a route due to such a change would result in any savings in vehicle capacity i.e., if two or three children cease to be entitled on a route served by a 53-seater, the vehicle would still be required to continue to serve other entitled pupils achieving no overall saving on that route.</p> <p>The last time this was considered, the level of saving to result from such a change was in the order of £10,000.</p> <p>Given the potential administrative time involved in this change, the high-profile challenge/appeals envisaged, and the very limited potential to achieve any savings this is not being pursued.</p>

4. What are the next steps/ actions the Council should take to pursue it? Please include timescales.

As with virtually all Services across the Council, the SET Team and budget holders have regularly and consistently explored opportunities to deliver savings. As such, there are no quick wins to be achieved. The workstreams identified within this proposal are complex and need dedicated time and resource if they are to be undertaken thoroughly and robustly. Although there is scope for some operational savings, to realise these will require additional staff resource in the short-term.

Longer-term, if cost pressures are to be managed, a more robust and on-going approach to demand management must be in place, challenging out-County SEND placements and solo transport provision to contain the rapid upward pressure on costs in these areas.

The proposals in this business case have been put together using strong, reliable data, however, the means by which to deliver this work are still uncertain. The next step will be to understand the approach to delivering the workstreams, ensuring that we have the right capabilities and capacity, to optimise the outcomes.

All of these workstreams will require additional resource and a subsequent business case will need to be produced detailing resources for planning, delivery, backfilling, design, project management and procedural changes. Whilst some of this can be delivered internally, external /additional capacity is essential in order to realise the improvements and savings/cost reduction identified. Key skill requirements are persuasion, negotiation and communication (both written and oral).

The subsequent business case will detail the timescales for delivery, taking into account considerations in respect of procurement, contract retendering and recruitment, as well as aligning workstreams to the academic as well as the financial year.

High Level Timetable

Task	Start Date	End Date	Overall Responsibility
Workstream 1	January 2022	ongoing	Transport Project Board
Workstream 2	January 2022	September 2023	Transport Project Board
Workstream 3	January 2022	ongoing	Transport Project Board
Workstream 4	September 2022	April 2024	Transport Project Board
Workstream 5	September 2022	April 2024	Transport Project Board

5. Could this have any effects on people with Protected Characteristics including poverty and rural isolation? If so, please provide as much detail as possible.

Children and young people will continue to be entitled to free or subsidised transport to and from school/college. What might change is how the child or young person is transported to school. We appreciate and understand that any change can be disruptive, unsettling and cause increased levels of anxiety and stress. For many children and young people with SEND changes to their routine and/or the people who transport them to and from school/college or support them with those journeys can cause them significant levels of distress and anxiety. It is essential, therefore, to ensure that any proposed changes are discussed with the parents/carers and, where the child or young person is able to verbalise and/or express their views, these will be listened to and that sufficient lead-in time is allowed to enable the child/young person and their family to adjust to those changes.

Travel time may be reduced, and support increased for independent or group travel. However, we also recognise the need to, and importance of, undertaking appropriate safeguarding assessments to ensure that no child or young person is placed at risk as a result of any changes to their transport arrangements.

Once a child has been placed at a school, they have a right to remain at that school even if a place was to become available at a school which is closer to their home. Any change of school would require the agreement of the child's parent/carer.

An Equality Impact Assessment will be developed in order to mitigate against any adverse impacts that may arise.

6. What financial and non-financial benefits are there and how will you measure the performance of these? Are there any dis-benefits? These MUST include how this will benefit the wider internal and external system.

Financial Benefits

The following savings have been identified:

Saving Area	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Workstream 1: Review and re-tendering of routes serving special schools	£200k	£400k	£200k

Workstream 2: Review of solo routes to in county special schools	£50k	£50k	£25k
Workstream 3: Operational review and demand management to reduce out authority transport costs.	£100k +Demand management	£120k +Demand management	£120k +Demand management
Workstream 4: Recruitment of volunteer drivers, volunteer Passenger Assistants (PAs)	£30k (pilot)	-	-
Workstream 5: Fleet review; looking into fleet infrastructure (vehicles and depots) and potential for the fleet to work across multiple Council areas	-	TBC	TBC
Total gross savings	£380k	£570k	£345k
Resourcing costs (see table below for details)	£161k	£161k	£161k
Total NET savings	£219k	£409k	£184k

Additional staff resource is essential given that current staffing levels and operational demands on SETT do not allow for the capacity for offline reviews, or to provide the additional “challenge” function with SEND service colleagues that would be required to better manage demand and address out-County placement and transport requests.

Resourcing Costs per workstream:

Saving Area	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total
Workstream 1 and 2 2xFTE @P1 for 3yrs and 1x FTE @S4 for 3yrs (potential permanent)	£45k p/a £45k p/a £26k p/a £116k total	£45k p/a £45k p/a £26k p/a £116k total	£45k p/a £45k p/a £26k p/a £116k total	£348k
Workstream 3 1xFTE @P1 for 3yrs	£45k	£45k	£45k	£135k

Workstream 4	Internal BID	Internal BID	Internal BID	-
Workstream 5	-	TBC (external)	TBC (external)	TBC

Non-financial benefits

Key Benefit	Measure	Baseline	Target & Timescale
Reduce travel time/long journeys for pupils	Reduce /contain out of County placements where more local provision would meet pupil needs	Approx. 300 pupils transported to out-County placements	No more than 200 pupils transported to out-County placements 3-5 years
Increase support of independent /group travel	Reduce solo taxis where no longer required	359 pupils on solo routes	No more than 200 pupils on solo routes in 3 years

Reducing carbon emissions

In addition to the benefits to children and young people, shorter journeys, fewer single occupancy taxi journeys and increased use of shared transport, including public transport, will reduce the number of vehicles required to get children to and from school and therefore reduce the associated emissions and carbon impact of those journeys. Potentially, these changes may improve feasibility for future fleet improvements as fewer vehicles and shorter trips may make a future shift towards low carbon vehicles (e.g., electric) more viable.

7. Are there any identified risks which may impact on the potential delivery of this? What is the risk if we do not act?

Risk	Mitigation	RAG (should the risk occur)	Overall Responsibility
Continued upward pressure on SEND transport budget	Demand management through active review of placement decisions and transport requests (there is an existing well-established process for reviewing and reaching decisions in respect of	Red	SEN

	exceptional transport requests – final approval rests with the budget holder)		
Reduction in competition for school transport contracts (due to driver shortages etc)	Continued proactive engagement with market to encourage new entrants /retain suppliers. Consider use of in-house fleet to address specific shortages	Amber	SETT
Unable to find the right personnel with the skills and knowledge required to deliver the work	Intention is to seek recruitment for both project roles or backfilling roles to maximise chances of finding the right staff	Amber	SETT

8. Scope: What is within scope? What is outside of scope?

The five workstreams (as detailed in section 1) are currently in scope.

Business Planning: Business Case – Savings proposal

Project Title: Virtual School

Committee: Children & Young People Committee

2022-23 Savings amount: £50,000

Brief Description of proposal:
Reviewing external income opportunities

Date of version: 18 November BP Reference: A/R.6.269

Business Leads / Sponsors: Jonathan Lewis

1. Please describe what the proposed outcomes are:

The Virtual school has seen an increase in external funding through pupil premium and a new grant to support children in the social care system that are not in care. Our current contribution from our core funding is higher than national average and we have more opportunities to recharge costs of the Virtual School to the grant income. As a result, a reduction in core funding is achievable whilst these grants are in place. The service will be unaffected by this change although there will be some reduced capacity for projects / initiatives but we are currently meeting our objectives in this area.

2. What evidence has been used to support this work, how does this link to any existing strategies/policies?

We have reviewed the latest Section 251 statement and it shows that we are spending above national average per pupil in this area. We have also seen some significant improvements in the work of the Virtual School and it is an appropriate time for this saving to be made.

3. Has an options and feasibility study been undertaken? Please explain what options have been considered.

Not applicable – saving can be realised without further work.

4. What are the next steps/ actions the Council should take to pursue it? Please include timescales.

The saving can be delivered from the 1st April 2021, in line with new grant allocations.

High Level Timetable

Task	Start Date	End Date	Overall Responsibility
Adjustment to budget	1 st April 2021	1 st April 2021	Finance

5. Could this have any effects on people with Protected Characteristics including poverty and rural isolation? If so please provide as much detail as possible.

The work of the virtual school covers all children in the social care system including those children in care. However, as the previous provision funded by direct council funding will now be met by grant, an Equality Impact Assessment will be developed.

6. What financial and non-financial benefits are there and how will you measure the performance of these? Are there any dis-benefits? These MUST include how this will benefit the wider internal and external system.

Financial benefits: £50k savings

7. Are there any identified risks which may impact on the potential delivery of this? What is the risk if we do not act?

Risk	Mitigation	RAG (should the risk occur)	Overall Responsibility
Ofsted inspection	The Virtual School is performing well and has sufficient capacity to undertake its work.	Green	Virtual School headteacher
Rising in the number of children in care	Bid back into the budget process for further funding.	Amber	Jonathan Lewis

8. Scope: What is within scope? What is outside of scope?

In scope: The grant is in relation to the virtual school.

Business Planning: Business Case – Savings proposal

Project Title: Grant and Core funding adjustments for support costs for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children [UASC]

Committee: Children and Young People Committee

2022-23 Savings amount: £350k savings

Brief Description of proposal:

Following a review of the level of grant funding provided by Central Government to local authorities for the support of unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people, it is possible to re-balance the contribution to support costs made from the core budget. This will have no impact on the services we provide to this group of children and young people; it merely reflects the increase in grant funding available.

Date of version: 22nd October 2021 BP Reference: A/R.6.271

Business Leads / Sponsors: Lou Williams

1. Please describe what the proposed outcomes are:

Cambridgeshire County Council is responsible for providing care, accommodation and other support to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children [UASC] aged under 18, and to former UASC aged 18+ when a UASC has either presented to authorities within the local authority area, or has been transferred to our care through either the regional or national transfer schemes.

Those under 18 are children in care to the authority; once they become 18 years of age, they are entitled to continuing support as care leavers. Until their immigration status is resolved, however, they are unable to access public funds such as housing benefit or universal credit/income support. Case law has confirmed that ordinary housing and living costs for care leavers who were formerly UASC must be met by the local authority as part of their duties to support care leavers.

The Government has contributed to the costs of providing care and support to UASC and former UASC for a number of years. Until these arrangements were revised in the 2019/20 financial year, the grants provided by Government did not meet the actual costs of caring for and supporting UASC and former UASC, resulting in councils like Cambridgeshire County Council supplementing these costs from core budgets.

2. What evidence has been used to support this work, how does this link to any existing strategies/policies?

This proposal is informed by the monitoring of actual support and care costs for this group of children and young people.

The saving identified is in line with amounts that could have been possible to transfer from grant to core funding over this and the previous financial year.

COVID-19 and trade/transport restrictions have reduced the number of spontaneous arrivals in the County, but numbers are beginning to increase once more. Because of the way that the grant funding operates, there is potential to transfer higher levels of grant funding to core funding if the numbers of UASC in the county increase.

3. Has an options and feasibility study been undertaken? Please explain what options have been considered.

N/A - This is not applicable in relation to this proposal.

4. What are the next steps/ actions the Council should take to pursue it? Please include timescales.

The ability to offer this saving from core budgets is the result of increased levels of government grant.

High Level Timetable

Task	Start Date	End Date	Overall Responsibility
Implement contribution towards Children's Social Care from existing grant allocations, allowable under conditions of grant	1 st April 2022	N/A	Lou Williams/Roger Brett/Finance

5. Could this have any effects on people with Protected Characteristics including poverty and rural isolation? If so please provide as much detail as possible.

There is no change to service delivery and UASC and former UASC will continue to receive the same levels of service in accordance with statutory guidance. However, an Equalities Impact Assessment will be developed to ensure the change is equitable.

6. What financial and non-financial benefits are there and how will you measure the performance of these? Are there any dis-benefits? These MUST include how this will benefit the wider internal and external system.

Financial Benefits

A saving to the core budget as a result of higher levels of government grant funding as explained above

Non-Financial Benefits

N/A The service delivery will remain the same

7. Are there any identified risks which may impact on the potential delivery of this? What is the risk if we do not act?

There are no identified risks.

8. Scope: What is within scope? What is outside of scope?

The core funding contribution to supporting UASC and former UASC with care and support needs will be reduced as a result of increased government grant. Actual funding will remain unchanged.