

Business Case

A/R.6.255 Children in Care - Placement composition and reduction in numbers & A/R.6.266 Children in care stretch target - Demand Management

Project Overview

Project Title	A/R.6.255 Children in Care - Placement composition and reduction in numbers & A/R.6.266 Children in care stretch target - Demand Management		
Project Code	TR001532	Business Planning Reference	A/R.6.255
Business Planning Brief Description	This business case describes how by a mixture of continued recruitment of our own foster carers and a projected reduction in overall numbers of children in care, overall costs associated with looking after children and young people in Cambridgeshire can be reduced in 2020/21 by a net amount of £2m compared with the budget for 2019/20. This is savings target in cash terms once allowances have been made for demography and other growth elements to the budget.		
Senior Responsible Officer	Lou Williams: Service Director Children & Safeguarding		

Project Approach

Background

Why do we need to undertake this project?

There are two main reasons for this project being required:

- Outcomes for Children:** There are significantly higher numbers of children in care in Cambridgeshire than our statistical neighbour average. There are currently around 780 children and young people in care in Cambridgeshire. If we were looking after a similar number as the average of our statistical neighbours, we would have closer to 630 in care. Councils should only look after children for whom there is no safe alternative, and should identify permanency outside the care system for all children who come into care as quickly as possible. Permanency options include safe return to parents or extended family, possibly under an order such as a Special Guardianship Order, or through adoption. Our high numbers suggest that we are not delivering the best possible outcomes in these areas. Higher numbers in care were a consequence of the previous structure within children's social care. A comprehensive restructure was completed in November 2018 and this will result in a reducing population of children in care, but this will take some time to take effect.
- Placement Mix:** When children need to be looked after, they are best placed with foster carers. There are two main sources of foster carers – those we recruit ourselves, and those recruited by Independent Fostering Agencies [IFAs]. Those we recruit ourselves are more likely to be local than those recruited by IFAs, and we know our carers better, meaning that we can place children with those who we are confident will 'fit' well within their family. Both are important factors since a more local carer means less disruption to family, friends and school networks for the child or young person, while improved matching means that there is less likelihood that a placement comes to an unplanned end, disrupting the lives of the children concerned.

- **Financial:** Looking after children is very expensive and our current looked after numbers are placing a considerable financial pressure on the Council. If this continues, the likelihood is that we will need to find savings from prevention and early help or other areas of the service, which will mean reduced levels of support available to vulnerable children and young people in the community, eventually risking higher numbers requiring support by specialist services. Placement mix also has a significant financial impact; foster care placements provided by an IFA are around twice the average cost of an in-house alternative and, given that they can be further away, may also result in higher costs in other areas including those associated with contact with birth families, to and from school and similar.

What would happen if we did not complete this project?

As implied by the above section, the Council will continue to experience significant financial pressures risking the delivery of important community-based services for vulnerable children and young people, while those in care are likely to experience poorer outcomes.

Approach

Aims / Objectives

Reduce overall numbers in care through improved permanency planning, the steady implementation of Family Safeguarding in Cambridgeshire by March 2020, and continued focused activity on recruitment and retention of foster carers in line with the targets set out in the tables below. (See 'assumptions, constraints and communications' section).

Limited investment in a finance officer role to be located within corporate parenting service to assist in controlling expenditure on placement related issues, including in respect of oversight of legal order and connected carer payments.

Project Overview - What are we doing

There are three main strands to achieving the savings:

- Implementation of Family Safeguarding;
- Focused recruitment of our own foster carers;
- Continued focus on securing permanency for children in care outside of the care system.

Implementation of Family Safeguarding

Cambridgeshire County Council has been awarded funding from the DfE (Department of Education) to establish this model. It already operates in Peterborough. The model brings adult-facing practitioners into children's teams. These practitioners are experienced in working with mental and emotional ill health, domestic abuse and substance and alcohol misuse. These factors, known as the 'toxic trio' are the most common ones that adults in families are struggling with where children are subject to child protection or children in need plans. Locating these adult practitioners in children's teams means that the adults in the family are much more likely to receive effective multi-disciplinary support for the challenges they face. Very often, for example, community based mental health services would not work with these parents as they would not meet eligibility thresholds. Adults struggling with substance and alcohol misuse can find travelling to clinics challenging, but are much more easily able to access services if they at least initially come to them.

Family Safeguarding resulted in around an 8% reduction in numbers in care in Hertfordshire. In Peterborough, there has not been a clear reduction in overall numbers, but the rate of children in care in Peterborough has remained constant over the last two years, while those within the statistical neighbour group have grown significantly. Peterborough has around 370 children and young people in care; it would

have 430 if its rate per 10,000 was in line with its statistical neighbour group.

Given that Cambridgeshire will begin Family Safeguarding with higher than expected numbers in the care system, it is reasonable to expect that the introduction of the model will bring a reduction in numbers coming into the care system as it becomes established. The model will be implemented by March 2020, and should become embedded during 2020/21.

Placement Mix: Continued focus on recruitment of our own foster carers

Cambridgeshire has a strong focus on recruiting our own foster carers through an on-going programme of campaigns and publicity. The target for the current financial year is a net increase of 24 households, which should result in a net increase of around 35 new fostering placements. The nature of fostering means that some carers will leave over the course of a year, meaning that securing a net increase of 24 households will mean over recruitment. The target for 2020/21 is also for a net increase in fostering households of 24.

There is a long lead in time in recruitment since carers have to be trained and assessed before they can be approved – a process that typically takes around six months. Numbers in the pipeline would indicate that the above target should be achievable, however, with an additional 23 fostering placements with in-house carers from the start of 2020 compared with the position as of July 2019. This would mean that numbers in in-house foster placements should increase from 207 to 230.

Continued focus on securing permanency for children in care outside of the care system

A system that is working well should offer the right focused support to the most vulnerable families so that issues are addressed and children can remain safely at home. This is a core expectation of the new Family Safeguarding approach. Where it appears not to be safe for children to remain at home, decisions should be made quickly. This is so that we reduce the likelihood of children suffering avoidable harm, and that we intervene when they are still young. It is easier to identify adopters for younger children and long term outcomes are better the younger that children are placed for adoption. Adoptions can and are successful for older children up to the age of 10, but judicial attitudes and availability of adopters combine to make it much more difficult in practice for adoption to be commonly progressed for children aged 5 and over.

Children coming into care at aged 8 and above are much more likely to remain in care for much or all of their childhoods. This is why it is important to make decisions about vulnerable children at the earliest age possible. Of course, families with older children move into the county, or serious challenges and difficulties may only become apparent as children become older, but our aim should be to offer the best support to families in order to maintain family relationships, while acting assertively in the best long term interest of children where there is clear evidence that their families are unable or unwilling to make the changes required.

Once children are in care, we need to balance the need for them to feel safe and secure in their placement with an openness of mind that families can make changes and, particularly as the child becomes older, this may mean that children can return home. However good we are as corporate parents, their birth family will always remain so and for a child in a long term foster placement, once they have left care, their longer term relationships may well remain with their birth family. This is an area that can challenge those working with children in care, and is one that we will continue to address to ensure that where it is safe and appropriate for them to do so, children and young people in care can return home even if the original plan was for them to remain in care until age 18.

Impact

The impact of the interplay of these factors are the ones that will drive forward a reduction in overall costs by a target of £2m during 2020/21. This follows a savings target in 2019/20 of £2m, against which the current projected £650k overspend needs to be viewed.

What assumptions have you made?

The most significant assumption is that the overall placement budget for 2019/20 comes in on line. There are some challenging aspects to this assumption; the budget has a £2m savings target and the projected overspend as of the end of July 2019 is £650k. This overspend is associated with the fact that numbers in care have remained stubbornly difficult to reduce, while spontaneous arrivals of unaccompanied asylum seeking young people offer an additional challenge, with 12 coming into our care from mid-June to mid-July. In addition, a serious incident in Cambridge at the start of the year has resulted in a number of high cost placements for a group of adolescents with a projected cost in excess of £600k, partly offset by a reserves contribution to date of £350k.

At the same time, the independent fostering market is showing every sign of being overwhelmed by growing numbers in care across the country. The number in care nationally began rising rapidly in 2017/18, a process that accelerated in 2018/19. Figures for 2019/20 will be available in the autumn, and there is every indication from market indications that the growth in numbers has continued. This means that it is more difficult to find foster placements, meaning that children and young people for whom a foster placement would have been available last year are now more likely to be placed within residential provision. This has significant cost implications since an IFA placement is around £850 per week, while residential placements start at over £3,000 per week.

While the budget is under pressure, it is committed at current placement costs; and as new in-house carers come on stream there will be some mitigation to costs, while any success in reducing numbers will also help to ease pressures.

The original expectation was that numbers in care should fall to the average of our statistical neighbours by the end of the 2020/21 financial year. Based on current numbers and that these have not reduced as expected to date this financial year, this target would appear to be very challenging to achieve in 18 months. Projections below are therefore modelled on different outcomes.

Cost avoidance associated with reductions in numbers in care are assumed to be based on the typical IFA rate of £850 per week. Increased availability of an in-house foster placements are assumed to result in a cost avoided of £400 per week based on the same IFA typical rate. In-house recruitment is assumed to be taking place at an even rate across the year and to result in 30 additional foster placements by year end, allowing for some slippage from the usual assumption of 1.6-1.8 placements per household, but assuming the net increase of 24 households is achieved. In year reductions in numbers in care are modelled at three different rates in the examples below.

Table 1: Illustrating the impact on cost-avoidance through increased in-house carer recruitment

Compared with the position as of July 2019, 23 additional in-house fostering placements contribute a full year cost avoidance of £478,400 from the start of April 2020. Additional cost avoided based on a steady increase by 2.5 in-house fostering households is as set out in the table below:

Month	Additional in-House Placements	Cost avoided based on remainder of 2020/21 year
Additional Placements from 2019/20	23	478400
End April 2020	2.5	48000
May 2020	2.5	44000
June 2020	2.5	39000
July 2020	2.5	35000
August 2020	2.5	30000
September 2020	2.5	26000
October 2020	2.5	22000
November 2020	2.5	17000
December 2020	2.5	13000
January 2021	2.5	9000
February 2021	2.5	5000
March 2021	2.5	0
Total cost avoidance for Year		766400

Clearly, if in-house recruitment does not achieve the targets in the current year, then there is a significant risk to the potential cost avoidance in 20/21 since we lose the full-year impact of every additional in-house placement that is not achieved.

Reducing overall numbers of children in care

There are three potential scenarios illustrated below, each modelled over the full year, based on an assumption that reductions in placement numbers are reduced at the weekly IFA typical rate of £850 per week. Clearly, reductions in numbers made at the beginning of the year create a larger cost avoidance than those made towards the end of the year.

Month	Number in Care			Cost Avoided		
	Low Optimism	Middle Optimism	High Optimism	Low Optimism	Middle Optimism	High Optimism
Beginning of year	780	780	780			
End April 2020	775	770	780	204000	408000	408000
May 2020	770	765	770	187000	187000	448800
June 2020	765	755	760	165750	331500	331500
July 2020	760	750	750	148750	148750	297500
August 2020	755	740	740	127500	255000	255000
Sept 2020	750	730	730	110500	221000	331500
Oct 2020	745	720	715	93500	187000	280500
Nov 2020	740	715	700	72250	72250	216750
Dec 2020	735	710	685	55250	55250	165750
Jan 2021	730	705	670	38250	38250	76500
Feb 2021	725	695	660	21250	42500	42500
March 2021	720	680	650	0	0	0
Total cost avoid for year: Reducing Numbers in Care				1224000	1946500	2854300
Total Cost Avoided: Placement Mix [See Table 1]				766400	766400	766400
Total Cost Avoided Placement Mix and Reduced Numbers				1990400	2712900	3620700

This assumes that numbers in care do not reduce further over the current financial year, and only begin to do so as Family Safeguarding becomes fully established from March 2020. Should overall numbers decline as the current financial year continues, then the starting point for 2020/21 will clearly be easier.

It is important to note that predicting placement numbers and mix is a very difficult challenge; and we are in a position where maintaining numbers at present levels is undermined annually by a rapidly increasing population of children in the County. We will also not know the extent to which numbers among our

statistical neighbours have increased in 2018/19 until the autumn; it may well be the case that we need to adjust our expected performance accordingly if the next round of national statistics continues to show a general picture of increased numbers in care.

Taking all this into account, what the table above shows is that through a combination of increased in-house carers and some reduction in numbers in care, a savings target of around £2M should be achievable, even if there is some slippage in placement mix or overall numbers. The 'High Optimism' column is just that – achieving this is very unlikely but it does illustrate how relatively small changes in overall numbers in care have a big impact on levels of spend.

From a risk perspective, given the volatility of this budget and the needs that are reflected within it, only relatively small rises in overall numbers can have an equally significant impact in the adverse direction.

There will be a need to slightly over-achieve savings in order to fund the proposed finance officer role within the corporate parenting service. The expectation is that this role will essentially more than pay for itself through enhanced scrutiny of legal order and connected carer payments, among other duties.

What constraints does the project face?

Constraints are limited to the highly unpredictable nature of the care population. A continued influx of spontaneous unaccompanied asylum seeking young people would, for example, increase the risk that reductions in overall numbers are delayed.

Delivery Options

Has an options and feasibility study been undertaken?

Scope / Interdependencies

Scope

What is within scope?

External Placement Budgets and in-house fostering services

What is outside of scope?

Project Dependencies

Title

Volatility of children in care numbers and growing child population

Cost and Savings

See accompanying financial information in Table 3

Non Financial Benefits

Non Financial Benefits Summary

As discussed above, we should only look after the right children for the right length of time if we are to enable them to achieve the best long term outcomes. While much of this paper covers financial aspects, it remains the case that the primary driver for these changes is to improve outcomes for children. This is to be

achieved by ensuring that as many as possible are safely able to remain within their birth families through Family safeguarding, and those who do need to come into care are placed with well-matched local foster carers.

Title

Risks

Title

Project Impact

Equality Impact Assessment

Who will be affected by this proposal?

Children in care

What positive impacts are anticipated from this proposal?

Fewer children come into care, with more remaining safely at home with their birth families, who have been enabled to make the changes needed in order to provide good care for their children. This avoids harmful disruption to family ties. Where children do come into care, they are more likely to be placed with local in-house foster carers, minimizing disruption to family and friendship relationships, reducing the likelihood of placement disruptions and making it easier to reunite families successfully once parents have made the changes they need to make.

What negative impacts are anticipated from this proposal?

None

Are there other impacts which are more neutral?

None

Disproportionate impacts on specific groups with protected characteristics

Details of Disproportionate Impacts on protected characteristics and how these will be addressed

N/A as there are no negative impacts anticipated

Business Case

A/R.6.267 Children's Disability 0 - 25 Service

Project Overview

Project Title	A/R.6.267 Children's Disability 0 - 25 Service		
Project Code	TR001544	Business Planning Reference	
Business Planning Brief Description	This business case describes how we can bring forward £50k of the planned £100k saving for 2021/22 to the 2020/21 financial year.		
Senior Responsible Officer	Lou Williams: Service Director Children & Safeguarding		

Project Approach

Background

Why do we need to undertake this project?

There are two main reasons for this project being required:

- **Outcomes for Children:** We have recently completed a restructure within the 0-25 service, which aligns this with the structure in the rest of children's social care – i.e. away from the unit model to one based on teams. There are clear benefits in doing this. The restructure has identified a £50k saving against budgeted staffing costs under the previous model.
- **Financial:** The unit cost of providing children's services in Cambridgeshire is high, in relative to our statistical neighbours, as illustrated by the chart below for 2017/18 [and it should be remembered that there was further investment in the Cambridgeshire service in 2018/19, meaning that our position may have moved further to the left since 2017/18]. There is a pressing need to identify ways in which we can reduce expenditure and particularly in areas where the impact is likely to be limited.

What would happen if we did not complete this project?

The Council will face increasing financial challenge unless we can bring our levels of expenditure down, and particularly in those areas where the evidence demonstrates that relative to similar authorities, expenditure is higher than would be expected, as is the case in children's services

Approach

Aims / Objectives

The restructure completed in 2019/20 has resulted in a £50k saving against staffing costs compared with the previous structure, as well as bringing the 0-25 service in line structure-wise with the rest of children's social care.

Project Overview - What are we doing

The £50k saving opportunity has arisen through a re-structure process and enables us to bring forward £50k of planned £100k savings from 2021/2 into the 2020/21 financial year.

Impact

There is no adverse impact from these changes.
What assumptions have you made?
None
What constraints does the project face?
None

Delivery Options
Has an options and feasibility study been undertaken?

Scope / Interdependencies
Scope
What is within scope?
0-25 services
What is outside of scope?

Project Dependencies
Title
Volatility of children in care numbers and growing child population

Cost and Savings
See accompanying financial information in Table 3

Non Financial Benefits
Non Financial Benefits Summary
The new structure based on specialist teams is already improving management oversight.
Title

Risks
Title

Project Impact

Equality Impact Assessment

Who will be affected by this proposal?

N/A

What positive impacts are anticipated from this proposal?

The team structure is a more effective one than the previous unit model

What negative impacts are anticipated from this proposal?

No negative impacts have been identified

Are there other impacts which are more neutral?

None

Disproportionate impacts on specific groups with protected characteristics

Details of Disproportionate Impacts on protected characteristics and how these will be addressed

None

Business Case

A/R.6.269 Review of Education Support Functions

Project Overview

Project Title	A/R.6.269 Review of Education Support Functions		
Project Code	TR001537	Business Planning Reference	A/R.6.269
Business Planning Brief Description	A review of the support functions across the Education Directorate, including Education Business Support		
Senior Responsible Officer	Jonathan Lewis		

Project Approach

Background

Why do we need to undertake this project?

- To improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Business Support as part of the Education Directorate
- To bring all aspects of Education Business Support together, following recent changes in structure within People and Communities.
- To embed the People and Communities working practices, currently employed by other directorates within People and Communities.
- To identify other possible efficiencies across the Education Directorate in order to release savings

What would happen if we did not complete this project?

If this project were not completed then required savings would not be made and areas of inefficiency across the Education Directorate would remain.

Approach

Aims / Objectives

- To improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Business Support as part of the Education Directorate
- To bring all aspects of Education Business Support together, following recent changes in structure within People and Communities.
- To embed the People and Communities working practices, currently employed by other directorates within People and Communities.
- To identify other possible efficiencies across the Education Directorate in order to release savings

Project Overview - What are we doing

Last year, the People and Communities (P&C) Departmental Management Team (DMT) agreed to undertake a P&C Business Support review to create greater flexibility across services and ensure business support is more aligned to business need.

The review included establishing some guiding principles for business support; changing the generic job descriptions outside of the Admin Job Families framework to better reflect the business requirements of business support services now and in the future and to ensure a workforce development plan to meet the emerging learning and development needs of staff is in place.

Using the principles of the overall review, the Education directorate will assess the work currently undertaken by Business Support and identify areas where efficiencies can be made, as well as areas where current resource is not adequate, resulting in a Business Support function more aligned to the directorate's needs.

A wider review of the Education directorate will be undertaken to assess the functions currently being provided and identify areas where services can be streamlined or reduced.

What assumptions have you made?

None identified at this stage.

What constraints does the project face?

None identified at this stage.

Delivery Options

Has an options and feasibility study been undertaken?

Scope / Interdependencies

Scope

What is within scope?

Education support functions, including Education Business Support, SAT Business Support, SEND Business Support, and other related functions across Education.

What is outside of scope?

Education savings discussed in other business cases, or savings related to other directorates

Project Dependencies

Title

Cost and Savings

See accompanying financial information in Table 3

Non Financial Benefits

Non Financial Benefits Summary

Title

Efficiency and ease of use

Risks

Title

Loss of expertise

Loss of efficiency

Project Impact

Equality Impact Assessment

Who will be affected by this proposal?

At this stage of the business planning process, proposals have not been fully developed. Equality Impact Assessments will be conducted in full at the appropriate time to assess the impact the changes will have on citizens and staff.

What positive impacts are anticipated from this proposal?

What negative impacts are anticipated from this proposal?

Are there other impacts which are more neutral?

Disproportionate impacts on specific groups with protected characteristics

Details of Disproportionate Impacts on protected characteristics and how these will be addressed

Business Case

A/R.6.202 - Youth Justice / Youth Support

Project Overview

Project Title	A/R.6.202 - Youth Justice / Youth Support		
Project Code	TR001536	Business Planning Reference	A/R.6.202
Business Planning Brief Description	Three identified areas to reduce spending in the youth offending service and youth support services with limited impact on service delivery.		
Senior Responsible Officer	Anna Jack		

Project Approach

Background

Why do we need to undertake this project?

The Youth Justice and Youth Support Service contribution towards the Council's business plan. Savings identified fall across three areas, one element of the proposal calls closure to an historic funding arrangement for a local youth project.

What would happen if we did not complete this project?

The Council would need to find savings from other service areas.

Approach

Aims / Objectives

To achieve a saving of £30k for 2020/21

Project Overview - What are we doing

1. Reducing the youth offending officer capacity of the Youth Offending Service by 0.3 - 0.5 FTE (exact amount to be confirmed) amounting to £15k saving
2. Reduce the Youth Support Service Community Reach fund by £9k, leaving a residual £25,475.
3. End grant to Gauntlet Auto Project of £6k (now a registered charity).

What assumptions have you made?

The case-load of the Youth Offending Service can be managed with reduced Youth Offending Officer time, being absorbed into business as usual.

Reducing the Community Reach Fund won't make a significant difference to the capacity of the Youth and Community Coordinators to develop and initiate local projects working alongside young people and communities.

The Gauntlet project will move to becoming self-sustaining

What constraints does the project face?

The potential for additional burden to be placed on the Youth Offending Service with reduced capacity.

Delivery Options

Has an options and feasibility study been undertaken?

Scope / Interdependencies

Scope

What is within scope?

Youth Offending Service and Youth Support Service

What is outside of scope?

Any other aspects of the service

Project Dependencies

Title

Cost and Savings

See accompanying financial information in Table 3

Non Financial Benefits

Non Financial Benefits Summary

Ending of an historical arrangement (25 yrs) with one grant funded organisation, which is anomalous.

Title

Risks

Title

Project Impact

Equality Impact Assessment

Who will be affected by this proposal?

Young Offenders and community groups/ organisations

What positive impacts are anticipated from this proposal?

- Contribution towards the Council's business plan
- Ending of an historical grant agreement with a project which is now anomalous

What negative impacts are anticipated from this proposal?

- Reduced offer to young offenders through reduced capacity of the YOS
- Reduced capacity to invest in community and youth focused initiatives
- Ending of funding to Gauntlet could impact on the viability of the project

Are there other impacts which are more neutral?

None

Disproportionate impacts on specific groups with protected characteristics

Details of Disproportionate Impacts on protected characteristics and how these will be addressed

Young people aged 10 – 17 who are the beneficiaries of the YOS and youth support services

The Gauntlet project will continue to run as registered charity.

Business Case

A/R.6.270 Review of Home to School Transport

Project Overview

Project Title	A/R.6.270 Review of Home to School Transport		
Project Code	TR001534	Business Planning Reference	A/R.6.270
Business Planning Brief Description	Review of Home to School Transport processes and provision to include procurement, shared services, demand management and supporting independence.		
Senior Responsible Officer	Jonathan Lewis, Service Director (Education), People and Communities		

Project Approach

Background

Why do we need to undertake this project?

Local Authorities have a statutory duty to provide free transport for pupils of compulsory school age where they meet certain eligibility criteria. The nationally recognised trend of escalating financial pressures from reducing budgets and increasing costs, in a time where complexity of need is also increasing, is placing significant pressures on the authority in fulfilling the statutory responsibilities for providing transport to and from educational establishments. In addition to the national trends reflected within the county, Cambridgeshire faces additional transport challenges associated with its rural nature which creates longer and more complex journey routes, a restricted market offering a limited number of operators supporting specialist vehicles and the additional challenges with recruiting passenger assistants and escorts. All combined, this creates complex challenges which must be reviewed across home to school transport provision, and beyond, in order to realise opportunities now and in the long term.

Since 2015/16, the costs associated with transport provision has increased from £18.3m to £21.2m in Cambridgeshire, and from £3.9m to £4.5m in Peterborough bringing the total service expenditure across both authorities to £25.7m in 2018/19. This increase has been particularly significant in SEND Home to School Transport with an increase in expenditure between 2017/18 and 2018/19 in Cambridgeshire of £1.3m, or 16%, and an increase of above 10% expected between 2018/19 and 2019/20.

This project will review the provision of home to school transport and the broader interdependencies across transport provision. This will include opportunities within adult and children social care transport provision, the role of schools and parents and explore opportunities to join up processes and procurement opportunities with Peterborough City Council with a view to meet demand, whilst reducing the financial pressures the authority faces.

What would happen if we did not complete this project?

The overspend will continue each year creating pressures on the service

Approach

Aims / Objectives

Following on from early investigative work undertaken, an investment of up to £410k from the Transformation Fund will be drawn down in tranches to explore the following areas, all underpinned by policy; Operational efficiency (route optimisation), contracted service costs, and demand for the service. Service demand will be framed around supporting independence in support of achieving positive family outcomes. Enablers will be to ensure the policy promotes positive outcomes through policy enforcement, and working closely with families and schools to explore more flexible transport options (such as greater uptake of personal transport budgets and independent travel training).

The anticipated work streams of the project are:

- Policy; changing behaviours and operational practice
- Route optimisation
- Transport procurement
- Reducing demand and increasing independence

The above will be in support of achieving a financially sustainable service, through independent travel wherever possible.

Where required, the work streams will be realised by resourcing specialist capacity to review transport policy, processes and procedures across services and with schools and parents, enabling the authority to fully consider options for centralising teams, joint procurement with Peterborough City Council where appropriate, and to increase the embedding of demand management and independence into the transport services we provide.

The investment will be drawn down in tranches and delegated responsibility for the draw down within the £410k will be given to the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Chairman of General Purposes Committee and the Chairman of Children and Young People Committee.

Project Overview - What are we doing

An initial scoping exercise identified good potential for savings to Cambridgeshire County Council through increased operational efficiencies, policy reviews, exploring joint procurement, demand management and supporting independence. Anticipated savings of £600k have been identified across these different areas for 2020/21.

Preliminary research suggests the following could be achieved:

- Assess the scope to create further reductions in the cost of transport provision
- Reduce the overall cost of transport provided through the external framework
- Reduce opportunities for variance in cost of transport provided through the external framework
- Increase operational efficiencies and reduce the duplication of cost experienced through 'being in business' twice;
- Introduce universal independent travel training assessments to reduce demand and promote independence
- Limit customer expectation through refined policy guidance and adjustments to the referral and assessment pathway

In addition to identifying the opportunities for change, the project will embed the delivery of a programme of Independent Travel Training, initially focused on post-16 students, and consider the wider role this approach has across other cohorts eligible for local authority supported transport.

What assumptions have you made?

As of June 2019 there were 183 SEN pupils travelling to school in individual taxis, with greater numbers travelling in low occupancy vehicles, sometimes with passenger assistants. The programme of Independent

Travel Training aims to give pupils the skills to transition from these high-cost low-occupancy vehicles and travel independently, whether this be walking, travelling on a public bus or travelling on an existing, shared home to school transport route.

What constraints does the project face?

Should the review not offer significant improvements or substantial savings, a contingency will be to insert a break clause within the specialist resource contract issued if the return on investment does not represent value for money.

Delivery Options

Has an options and feasibility study been undertaken?

Scope / Interdependencies

Scope

What is within scope?

What is outside of scope?

Project Dependencies

Title

Cost and Savings

See accompanying financial information in Table 3

Non Financial Benefits

Non Financial Benefits Summary

Home to school transport provision for those eligible is centered on enabling and ensuring people can attend education, in support of providing a best start in life. A key element of the project is centered on independence, creating opportunities to embed independence when offering transport provision to those who have the ability to be independent, but require support in doing so. This long term view will involve changing the conversation with schools, parents and families, in order to offer a mechanism towards independence and positive life outcomes.

Title

Risks

Title

Project Impact

Equality Impact Assessment

Who will be affected by this proposal?

All pupils who meet the statutory requirement to be provided transport to and from home and educational establishments.

What positive impacts are anticipated from this proposal?

The statutory requirement to provide educational transport to those eligible will be embedded within independence and community demand. The long term aim will be to meet the increasing transport demands, whilst embedding positive outcomes for pupils and families through promoting independence.

What negative impacts are anticipated from this proposal?

At this stage no negative impacts have been identified. As a significant part of the project will review the opportunities for savings and change, it is anticipated that equality impact assessment(s) will be carried out at the points where major change is identified and implemented.

Are there other impacts which are more neutral?

Disproportionate impacts on specific groups with protected characteristics

Details of Disproportionate Impacts on protected characteristics and how these will be addressed

The above impacts relate specifically to age, disability and income, and added to that, the challenges faced in transporting pupils across a rural county. The statutory requirement will ensure the authority continues to provide transport for those eligible. The expectation will be to increase independence and therefore future positive outcomes for those in which the review may impact.