

# **Gloucestershire County Council Budget Scrutiny 2021/22**

## **Children & Families**

**7 January 2021**

# 2020/21 Children's Services Revenue Forecast Position (Non-DSG)

- Cabinet in December reported an overspend of £14.648m (October forecast) and net of COVID-19 £7.669 million overspend
- Significant variances are as follows:
  - External Placements £9.266m
  - Safeguarding staff costs £1.523m
  - Young people support £0.546m
  - Management (Improvement) £0.753m
  - Home to School Transport £2.594m

# 21/22 budget investment - total £9.327m

## Significant Investments – Vulnerable Children

- External placements - £3m
- Additional social work capacity and support - £1.241m
- Special guardianship orders - £0.875m
- Pay awards and allowance inflation - £1.364m
- One-off funding (management capacity) - £0.282m

## Significant Investments – Education

- Home to school transport - £2m
- Support to children with SEND - £0.2m
- Pay awards and transport inflation - £0.481m

Total savings – Vulnerable Children (£4k), Education (£112k)

# Mitigating our risks and challenges (1)

- Continued implementation of our Sufficiency Strategy to:
  - ensure we have the right mix of placements available for children in care, supported by an effective market
  - deliver Trevone House to reduce costs and provide more appropriate placements for older teenagers
  - Explore further options to develop in-house provision
  - Maximise the use of in-house foster care capacity and achieve an 70/30% split with independent foster care providers
- Complete our Permanence Project
- Develop and implement an Edge of Care Service comprising of:
  - Diversionary activity – to maintain children at home
  - Support in care – to prevent/reduce placement disruption
  - Reunification – to support the safe return of children to their home

# Mitigating our risks and challenges (2)

- Continue to deliver our Workforce Strategy including:
  - Ongoing review of pay and working conditions to retain staff
  - Growing our own workforce – ASYE, Step Up, Frontline and Overseas SWs.
  - Continued professional development for practitioners supported by the SW Academy and Research in Practice.
- Working with local partners to develop our early help offer to ensure appropriate support is provided at the earliest stage and reduce demand on statutory services
- On going development of our panel arrangements to support effective and consistent decision-making across all services for placements/expenses Inc. new entry to care panel.

# Mitigating our risks and challenges (3)

- Joint Additional Needs Strategy – to reduce costs, through early intervention, ensuring children receive the right level of support to meet their needs at the right time.
- Home to school transport – review of mainstream HTST and SEND policies and HTST operator contracts to be undertaken spring/summer 2021 to reduce costs where appropriate.

# Risks and Challenges

- Continuing rise in children in care numbers (800) and those on child protection plans.
- Potential for further demand pressures to emerge due to ongoing impact of Covid.
- Repeat activity – re-referrals, repeat child protection planning and subsequent care episodes.
- Combined demands on Directorate of prolonged Covid response, inspection preparation and transformation of services.
- Recruitment and retention of experienced social work (and other specialist) staff.
- Placement choice and market sufficiency for complex placements – due to both regional and Covid factors
- Growth in EHCP Plans (300 to 350 per year) and consequential pressure on the High Needs Block (DSG).