

**Gloucestershire County Council Budget Consultation
2023/24**

Schools' Forum Date	12 th January 2023
Type of Decision	For information and comment as part of the consultation
Background Documents	Council Strategy and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/23 – 2025/26 Council Report: 16 th February 2022 2023/24 Budget Consultation document published 8 th December 2022 GCC Budget Consultation 2023/24
Author	Sue Hall, Finance Business Partner <i>Extracts of report presented by:</i> Paul Blacker: Director of Finance Steve Mawson: Executive Director of Corporate Resources Jayne Fuller: Corporate Finance Manager
Purpose of Report	To inform the Schools Forum of the budget strategy that has been consulted on and draft details for 2023/24.
Key Recommendations	That the report is noted and that any comments are fed back through the meeting. The public consultation ended on 5 th January 2023
Resource Implications	The report covers the Council's overall budget and the specific financial implications for Children and Families.

Summary of Information

The attached report is the summary MTFS position included in the budget consultation published on 8th December for the whole Council. The link to the detailed report is included above but a number of specific annexes relating to the overall budget and specifically to Children and Families are attached for information. These include:-

- Annex 2: Budget Summary by Service Area for the Council & budget movements in services for Children and Families
- Annex 3: Detailed schedules for Vulnerable Children and Other Children Services
- Annex 1 - Children and Families Commissioning Intentions

In summary, it is proposed that Children and Families receives cost increases of £22.079 million and achieves cost reductions of £1.279 million, a net increase in budget of £20.8 million. The Council's financial planning cycle has recognised the continued pressure on the children's and families budget during 2022/23. The forecast overspend at September was £14.992 million but included within these figures is the forecast additional cost of the impact of COVID-19 on budgets which totals £3.35 million giving an underlying over-spend of £11.642 million and this is reflected in the investment being made.

Cabinet will consider draft spending plans and responses to the consultation at its January meeting before recommending a draft budget for Full Council to approve at its February meeting.

Annex 2 – Budget Movements by Service Area

Medium Term Financial Strategy – 2023/24 Budget – Overall Summary

Budget Area	Approved 2022/23 Budget	Removal of 2022/23 One Off Budget Adjustments	Agreed Budget Transfers between Service Areas	Revised MTFS 2022/23 Base Budget	Pay Inflation Costs	Cost Increases	Cost Reductions	Proposed 2023/24 Budget	Cash Increase / Decrease	Percentage Increase / Decrease
	£'000	£000	£000	£'000	£000	£000	£000	£'000	£000	%
Programme Budget Areas										
Adults	165,007	-578	-105	164,324	3,359	17,576	-6,780	178,479	13,472	8.16%
Vulnerable Children	116,000	-1,866	294	114,428	3,769	11,013	-1,074	128,136	12,136	10.46%
Other Children Services	23,703	-976	-673	22,054	1,041	6,256	-205	29,146	5,443	22.96%
Economy, Environment and Infrastructure	82,795	-1,454	953	82,294	1,676	14,928	-6,797	92,101	9,306	11.24%
Community Safety	22,091	-810	-1,004	20,277	1,448	1,751	-8	23,468	1,377	6.23%
Prevention & Wellbeing	35,651	0	-7	35,644	187	819	-247	36,403	752	2.11%
Corporate Resources	39,490	-1,868	248	37,870	2,620	5,074	-887	44,677	5,187*	13.13%
Technical & Countywide	36,593	-3,500	294	33,387	1,056	469	-6,824	28,088	-8,505	-23.24%
Total Budget	521,330	-11,052	-	510,278	15,156	57,886	-22,822	560,498	39,168	7.51%

**The growth figure for Corporate Resources is higher than previous years due to the impact of increased utility fees and fuel inflation. This accounts for £2.331m of the net increase of £5.187m*

Annex 3 - Detailed schedules below

2023/24 Children and Families Budget - Vulnerable Children

	Cost Increases £000	Cost Reductions £000	£000
Budget Changes:			
Approved MTFS 2022/23 Budget			116,000
Removal of 2022/23 One Off Budget Increase			-1,866
Agreed Service Budget Transfers			294
Starting Budget (2022/23 Revised Budget)			114,428

Cost Increases

Pay Inflation 23/24 (4%)	1,901
Back Pay 22/23 Pressure (4.4%)	1,868
Fostering/SGO Allowances/Adoption West contract price uplifts based on 4%.	550
The full year effect budget for fostering staff recruited part way through 22/23	62
Contract inflation on the placement budget based on a 4% uplift to meet the cost of living increases incurred by providers	1,431
Implementation of the Systemic Practice model of social work to support the continued practice improvement	80
Legal fees - increase in the number of non-legal disbursements linked to the rise in care proceedings	284
Increase in the hourly rate for Direct Payments and Care packages for disabled children and young people	320
External Placements budget: Rise in number and cost of placements - the bid is based on increasing the budget to allow for 383 placements at an average unit cost of £116k per annum. The current year budget is based on a unit price of £108.6k although the forecast currently stands at £121.5k but is skewed by a few complex cases. The September Care Ladder shows 381 placements forecast. Reducing Children in Care numbers, improving the market sufficiency and the use of the in-house service will reduce the current requirement and future requirements into 23/24	6,235

One Off Cost Increases

External Placements budget: Rise in number and cost of placements - the bid is based on increasing the budget to allow for 383 placements at an average unit cost of £116k per annum. The current year budget is based on a unit price of £108.6k although the forecast currently stands at £121.5k but is skewed by a few complex cases. The September Care Ladder shows 381 placements forecast. Reducing Children in Care numbers, improving the market sufficiency and the use of the in-house service will reduce the current requirement and future requirements into 23/24	999
Additional funding to cover the cost of the difference between permanent and agency staff so that agency staff are appointed when permanent staff are not available	700
Additional funding to meet the cost of high cost placements for Disabled Children and Young People	352

2023/24 Children and Families Budget - Vulnerable Children Continued	Cost Increases £000	Cost Reductions £000	£000
<u>Cost Reductions</u>			
Efficiencies to be achieved through a range of measures set out in the Children's Services Financial Recovery Plan		-432	
Reduction in number of Child Arrangement Allowances required		-70	
ICT Floor Walkers - service not providing support required therefore resource released		-120	
Commissioning of the Day Service at Trevone not taking place		-300	
Release of funding originally allocated to commissioning for the development of Early Years services		-150	
<u>Income Targets</u>			
Income Targets 3%		-2	
TOTAL PROPOSED NET CHANGE	14,782	-1,074	13,708
Children & Families - Vulnerable Children Budget 2023/24			128,136

2023/24 Children and Families Budget - Other Children Services

	Cost Increases £000	Cost Reductions £000	£000
Approved MTFS 2022/23 Budget			23,703
Removal of 2022/23 One Off Budget Increase			-976
Agreed Service Budget Transfers			-673
Starting Budget (2022/23 Revised Budget)			22,054

Budget Changes:

Cost Increases

Pay Inflation 23/24 (4%)	515	
Back Pay 22/23 Pressure (4.4%)	526	
Home to School Transport Contractual Inflation for 22/23 and 23/24 (4%)	1,975	
Home to school transport - growth needed to cover expected increase in 23/24 SEN pupil transport entitlements plus increase in parent transport allowance	2,674	
Provision for Statutory SEND services and SEND support services due to the increase in number of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) to work towards caseloads of 158 cases per worker based on 6000 EHCPs. This will include 11 caseworkers G7; 3 process coordinators G5; Deputy Service Manager RB1; 3 Locality Leads G11; 3 Admin G5; 0.5 FTE Education Psychologist and offset in traded income by £380k.	1,411	

One Off Cost Increases

Provision for Statutory SEND services and SEND support services to provide for 2.5 FTE Education Psychologists - One-Off	196	
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Cost Reductions

Education Pensions: Reduce the budget based on an assessment of the reduction in no. of pensioners and spouses based on age and trends		-200
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Income Targets

Income Targets 3%		-5
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TOTAL PROPOSED NET CHANGE

7,297	-205	7,092
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Children & Families - Other Services Budget 2023/24

29,146

* This budget excludes the ringfenced Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

Annex 1 – Commissioning Intentions

Directorate

Children and Families

Context and Strategic Direction

Children and Families Commissioning

Children and Families Commissioning continues on a journey of improvement, bolstered by a positive Children's Services Ofsted Inspection in 2022. The Ofsted report highlighted significant improvements in key areas, demonstrating our continued forward trajectory as we further improve services for Gloucestershire Families, Children and Young people into 2023/24.

'The local authority has strengthened its quality and performance management arrangements, providing senior leaders with a good understanding of the quality and impact of practice.

Ofsted Report 1st April 2022

The Josh MacAlister Independent review of Children's Social Care (May 2022) additionally laid out a number of key recommendations, all of which are pertinent to our continual journey to Outstanding. It is therefore our intention to embed the key recommendations highlighted into practice over the next 3 years once this report has been endorsed by Government

Our strategic direction continues to follow the Children and Families plan and is further informed by pending launch of our newly revised Sufficiency Strategy – **Home@Heart**. We also continue to be informed by longer term corporate strategies laid out in local and national strategic guidance including; *Gloucestershire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2030*, *The NHS Long Term Plan 2019-2024*, *The national strategy for autistic children young people and adults 2021-2026* and *The NHS England CYP Transformation programme*. In addition, our local *Preparation for Adulthood strategy*, continues to bring together the key priorities for our young people, where seamless transition into adulthood is of the utmost importance. It is further intended to review this strategy in 2023.

Placements continues to be an area of focus both locally and nationally as the continual impact of the updated 2023-24 legislation is felt which barred the placement of under 16s within unregistered accommodation, and from April 2023 a further new legislation change which requires semi-Independent accommodation for Care Leavers to be registered with Ofsted for the first time. We have put in place an assertive trust group looking at Placement efficiencies and cost reduction strategies

During the pandemic, the Commissioning Hub took on full responsibility for a number of key government grants and initiatives supporting vulnerable young people and their families such as the Local Support Grant and the Household Support Grant, as well as delivering the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) Programme. As part of the National Spending Review, the HAF programme will now be funded for a further 3 years - 2022-2025, and the Household support fund has been extended in 2022/23.

Gloucestershire was also successful in year 1 funding for a Short-breaks project which concentrated on support for children of a younger age (0-8) in rural areas. Short-breaks commissioning intends to continue with this funding stream and apply for year 2 and year 3 to continue the work in rural areas, but also extend this out to provide an inclusive county wide offer and higher age range (0-11 years) if successful this new offer will work in conjunction with the development of the Family hubs and early prevention.

A major priority for Children's Commissioning in 2023 is continuing partnership work with our Voluntary and Community sector partners, which has become even more critical with the proposed redesign and commissioning out of a Family Hub practice model that supports an Early Help Strategy, Universal Services and an Early Intervention offer to children and families. A recommissioned Family Hub service model will better allow for the alignment of locality-based services with therapeutic services for children affected by Domestic abuse, such as trauma recovery toolkit training and courses for children and their parents.

Similarly retender of the Youth Support contract will be redesigned into 2023 with the intention of realigning the service into locality-based provision parallel to the Family Hubs model. Alignment of the Youth and Family Hubs is a key component of our drive to achieve better integrated locality-based family services, thereby ensuring that families with children and young people aged 0-19 (up to 25 years for SEND) receive early help to reduce risk, overcome a range of difficulties and build stronger relationships within the family, with other families in the community, and with agencies that can help them build their resilience.

SEND Service

SEND Services continue to make small and slow steps of progress in a range of areas. Progress is slow as demand continues to be high with customer satisfaction remaining exceptionally low.

Demand and poor customer experience is moving capacity away from making service improvements, to continual reactive behaviour thus maintaining the continued cycle of low performance and satisfaction.

Complaints continue to be high, with a vast majority seeking escalation with relative immediacy. Tribunals are high as are the growth of matters going before the LGO with finding in favour for families and fines for the LA.

All are at the highest point ever seen within SEND Services in Gloucestershire.

The number of EHCPs continue to rise. This is impacting on the EHCP casework Service and the Educational Psychology service with caseloads and availability to provide quality work and manage demand to be increasingly schools facing. This is impacting on workforce stability and retention.

DfE are continuing to monitor Gloucestershire's timeliness, with a recent request for a position on when the LA is going to meet and maintain 40%. At this time, the service is not able to meet and maintain this target with current capacity and resource.

The growth in EHCPs is impacting on schools' perception, and in some cases ability, to meet need of children with EHCPs in mainstream settings. This is evidenced with the numbers of children moving to elective home education, or requiring part-time timetables, attendance being impacted, growth in suspensions and permanent exclusions in the primary sector. This all means that children who are already disadvantaged are not receiving the education they should be to achieve positive outcomes.

The primary need of children experiencing challenges in schools is Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH), although not formally triangulated, this could be considered as a result of the availability of health services such as CAMHS, speech therapy and occupational therapy. Lack of universal and targeted holistic provision at the earliest stage is driving an increase in needs, poor outcomes, and higher costs.

System structures have been put into place to develop the foundations for improvement. This includes a skilled and stable leadership team, improved pathways into the services, improved threshold response to demand, digital solutions, reviews of customer experiences and in partnership with the Inclusion service, development of banded funding, an Inclusion baseline, and the development of non-statutory funding.

The Inclusion and SEND strategies have been signed off by cabinet and a Local Area Partnership Strategic board has been established. This is in line with the SEND Green Paper. It will have oversight of strategy delivery and create shared partnership ownership and accountability of SEND in the local area.

Early Years' Service

GCC Early Years' service, along with other partner services, has responsibility to deliver the LA duties of the Childcare Act:

- The early years outcomes duties require the provision of early years services and joint working between agencies to reduce inequalities, improve outcomes and narrow the gap.
- The sufficiency duties require Local Authorities to ensure sufficient early education and childcare for the early years' entitlements at two, three and four, and that they enable parents to take part in employment and employment-related activities (childcare for children aged 0-14, or 18 for children with a disability).
- The information duties require Local Authorities to ensure information for both childcare providers and families to meet the other childcare duties

Although not yet published, 2022 EYFS data indicates that the national benchmark for children attaining a good level of development has reduced from 71.8% to 65.2%. In Gloucestershire unconfirmed data reflects a decline in % from 71.9% to around 67%. We anticipate that the disparities in % attaining a good level of development for children eligible for FSM and those from certain ethnic groups will still be evident. This is explored in more detail in the needs analysis

There are signs that the pandemic has further widened the gaps for a generation of children who have missed out on significant time in pre-school provision. In a 2020 survey, Key Stage 1 teachers reported that, on average, 46% of children aged four or five had arrived for their first year in Reception not 'ready for school' (in contrast with 35% in 2019).

We know that the drivers of children's outcomes at age 5 include, but are broader than, what happens within Early Years settings. Parents play a crucial role in their children's early development and access to effective support services in the preschool years are, for some, critical to identifying and supporting children at risk of falling behind

In response to this Gloucestershire identified "Best Start in Life" as one of seven priorities of its Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy, 2020-2030 and one of three priorities of the Children & Young People's wellbeing coalition plan.

The 'Best Start in Life' coalition subgroup have the following priorities:

- To listen to children and their families from across Gloucestershire so that we can understand the barriers and enablers to better health and wellbeing and to ensure that their wishes are at the heart of everything we do.
- To work in partnership to identify children that could benefit from early intervention and support services but are not currently doing so.

- To hold shared accountability for improving outcomes for those aged 0-5.
- To ensure that clear information on services and support is available and accessible, including to families who may be less likely to access support and who may need it the most.
- To support the development of the national 'Start for Life' offer as this is rolled out
- To provide support to address the impact of COVID-19 on families.
- To work in partnership, and to escalate where necessary, workforce and pathway issues that prevent or restrict the delivery of the support services needed in Gloucestershire, e.g., workforce capacity.
- To facilitate integrated commissioning and provision which enables efficient, effective and child friendly services

Commissioning for Learning Service

In Education, we continue to work within the context of the School Places Strategy to commission and deliver sufficient high quality school places, where they are needed at the appropriate time. We are striving to achieve delivery targets for the majority of schemes despite rapidly increasing costs. We continue to ensure that CYP are able to access schools through the coordinated and in year/fair access admissions processes and, where eligible, are provided with transport assistance to school.

There is a continuing challenge in securing appropriate levels of developer contributions towards essential school infrastructure arising from new housing development. Working with Strategic Planning colleagues we continue to make the case at appeal. A new survey of pupil yields from new development has been commissioned and is underway to inform education planning policy in 2023.

In addition to mainstream school place planning, we are also carefully monitoring the need to commission and deliver more special school places. A constant rise in the number of children and young people with an Education Health and Care Plan has put significant pressure on our existing special school infrastructure. A new special school has been opened in Sept 2022 and another is planned to open in the autumn of 2023. The LA is submitting bids for a further two special schools as part of the Wave 15 bid process, to hopefully deliver more specialist provision in future years to meet demand.

Needs Analysis

Children and Families Commissioning

Gloucestershire will be launching its new Sufficiency Strategy Home@Heart, which outlines the local regional and national challenges to placement sufficiency. This will provide a four year long to medium plan to meet our sufficiency needs locally. An optional appraisal is being developed to consider the best delivery model for our ambitious plans to deliver provision locally. These ambitious plans will require a dedicated focus on developing the workforce, to deliver the provision, a new workforce academy for Gloucestershire will be established building on our successful social work academy model. Ofsted estimates that nationally over 10% of current residential children's homes do not have qualified registered managers, without investment and dedicated commitment to attracting, training and developing a local workforce, the implementation of the Sufficiency Strategy will be delayed by a considerable length of time.

The scarcity of Placement provision is a continuing concern for Children's services. The market remains 'Provider led' and the cost of Placements continue to rise in accordance with foreseeable market logistics associated with limited supply coupled with high demand. According to national government statistics, the largest proportion of Children's homes places in England and Wales are

provided by the for-profit sector (currently 70% in England and 78% in Wales). Independent Fostering agencies (IFA's) provide 19% of Placements in England and Wales.

Although we have worked to reduce the numbers of our care assisted young people placed in residential provision outside of Gloucestershire, numbers remain significantly high, resulting in an adverse impact on already stretched GCC budgets.

Costs charged to local authorities for Private children's homes increased by 40% in 2019* and have continued to rise year on year with the increase in living costs (**taken from the National Centre for Excellence in Residential childcare*). In March 2021, the Government commissioned an external review of Private Social Care Provision by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), to examine reasons behind the lack of availability and increasing costs, which could be further leading to the needs of children in care not being met.

The review showed that there has been limited development of the market, with some companies making immense profits - indeed a report published in January 2021 by the Local Government Association and Revolution Consulting found that some large private providers were achieving profits of 20.6% on their income. The findings of the CMA review were published in March 2022 and put forward 3 key recommendations:

1. To improve Commissioning, by having some functions performed via collaborative bodies, providing additional nation support and supporting LA initiatives to provide more in-house foster care.
2. To reduce barriers to providers creating and maintaining provision, by reviewing regulatory and planning requirements, and supporting the recruitment and retention of care staff and foster carers.
3. To reduce the risk of children experiencing negative effects from children's home providers exiting the market in a disorderly way, by creating an effective regime of market oversight and contingency planning.

All of these recommendations will have an impact in Placements moving forward and may have the effect of relieving individual LAs of their statutory duties as they are encouraged to form a consortium of sorts with an oversight structure to carry out certain functions.

The Short-breaks team continue to analyse local need and have since gained increased clarity and a better understand of the number of children and young people eligible for short breaks alongside the needs of their families.

The revised Short-breaks contracts came into effect as of the 1st July 2022, with 8 lots going out to the market. Pre-pandemic, developing provision within the Short-breaks market was already proving to be very challenging. Currently there remains real pressure within the market, which is forecasted to continue into 2023 and for the foreseeable future. The Post pandemic recovery period has been slower than other areas and Short-breaks provision closed down services early and for the longest time period. Therefore, only 4 lots within the new tender were allocated out of the original 8 and Commissioners have worked with Procurement colleagues to develop options for the remaining 4 lots. A new Short-breaks framework will be developed over in 2023, to create an offer that gives families choice and control over their Short-breaks choices. This can only be achieved by having some extensive market engagement to encourage new Providers into the County.

Access to resource panel remains under review while commissioning have had a lead function for the development of consistent and county wide processes and procedures. Over the coming year a new framework will be set up to support Section 17 spend, direct spend will then be managed more

locally within localities, with commissioning taking on a more specialist functions were provision needs to be sourced outside of the new framework.

SEND Service

Needs analysis has shown clear need for growth with SEND services. This growth is to respond to demand, improve outcomes for children/families/schools and overall satisfaction.

This is intended to be delivered through changing models in practice and increased workforce to reduce caseloads to models recognised nationally to improve outcomes and practice. Longer term the aim is to respond to needs at the earliest point in a child's life and reduce demand at statutory level.

Needs analysis has shown increased need for special school places. We have increased capacity within all In County special schools and are increasingly reliant on use of in and out of County independent provision. This has an impact on increased spend in Home to School transport, EHCP casework time and the Dedicated Schools Grant at a time of poorer outcomes and less flexibility to improve overall outcomes for children of Gloucestershire.

Early Years' Service

1. Attainment, disparities and narrowing the gap

The EYFS profile is a teacher-observed assessment completed at the end of the Reception year which provides teachers and parents with a well-rounded picture of a child's knowledge, understanding and abilities against expected levels and their readiness for Year 1. Each child's level of development is assessed against the 17 Early Learning Goals. A Good Level of Development (GLD) is calculated using the first 12 ELGs.

The latest published EYFS figures for 2019 show that on average in England almost a third (28.2%) of children do not reach a 'good level of development' by the age of five. Once children have fallen that far behind, it is hard for them to catch up. For many, their futures are being determined before they get anywhere near a classroom. The scientific evidence is overwhelming; whatever happens in the first 1001 days of life is critical to outcomes later in life.

EYFS results also indicate that children from low-income families are less likely to develop positively across the range of measures by the end of Reception compared with their peers. Analysis of EYFS results finds that disadvantaged children are on average 4.6 months behind by the end of the Reception year.

The EYFS profile data has not been collated since 2019 due to the Covid pandemic. Nationally, in 2019, 71.8% of children achieved a good level of development at age five - up from 51.7% in 2013 - and, since 2013, the gap between children in receipt of free school meals and their peers achieving a good level of development at age five has narrowed by 1.7 percentage points.

In Gloucestershire, in 2019, 71.9% of all children attained a good level of development (GLD) which is a rise from 52% in 2013. The overall % of children in Gloucestershire attaining GLD in 2019 matched the national average, having been below this for several years. However, too many children still finish the Reception year without the language and early literacy skills they need to thrive which the evidence shows are critical areas for building a foundation for later success

- The gap between children receiving FSM attaining GLD, and their peers, has gradually narrowed by 2.3 percentage points (pp) since 2013 but is still greater than the gap at the national level. In 2019, 51.9% of FSM-eligible pupils attained GLD, compared with 74.3% of non-FSM pupils. Nationally, 56.4% of FSM-eligible pupils attain GLD. This is summarised in the table below:

Year	National	Gloucestershire
2019 (all pupils)	71.8 %	71.9 %
2019 (FSM pupils)	56.4 %	51.9 %

- In every ethnic group, apart from Black Caribbean, FSM-eligible pupils were less likely to attain GLD than non-FSM pupils. There was only one child with their ethnicity recorded as Black Caribbean and who received FSM, and this child achieved GLD and therefore this number is too small to draw a clear conclusion.
- In 2019 the attainment gap between white and black pupils was 4% nationally and 14% in Gloucestershire
- In every ethnic group, girls were more likely to attain GLD than boys. Since 2018, the gender gap has stayed the same in all areas, except for Physical Development. In each of the seven Areas of Learning, a higher proportion of girls than boys are achieving at least the expected level. The largest gender gaps are in Literacy and Expressive Arts and Design

There was no EYFS data collated in 2020/21 due to the pandemic. 2022 data has not yet been published, but unconfirmed data reflects a national decline in the % of children attaining a good level of development, from 71.8% to around 65%.

Using the same unpublished data, Gloucestershire have also seen a decline in % from 71.9% in 2019 to around 67% in 2022. Whilst this puts us above the national benchmark, this reflects a cohort of young children struggling to reach expected development progress post pandemic. It is likely that the attainment gaps (FSM and ethnicity) seen in 2019 will still be apparent in 2022 data.

We have seen an increase in the number of requests for Education Health and Care needs Assessments (EHCNA) for children under statutory school age, including an increase in parental requests and requests for special school provision. This could be due to the following factors:

- An increase in the number of children with additional needs relating to social and emotional resilience, speech, language, and communication difficulties – because of changing home/family/parenting circumstances and the impact of Covid.
- Limited/no access to specialist intervention (EP, AT, S<) for young children without an EHCP.
- Lack of progress made in the preschool setting, due to lack of access to specialist support (as above) and/or lack of skills, confidence of EY practitioners, low funding etc
- Lack of parental confidence in the mainstream school sector
- Parents being advised by practitioners (predominantly health) that their child requires specialist provision

- Parents being advised by the child's allocated school to request EHCNA due to the need for additional resources to meet the child's need, often despite the child's needs being met in universal EY provision – reflecting pressures on school budgets
- Some children with SEND not accessing an EY setting prior to starting school, due to lack of parental confidence in mainstream EY provision and/or advice from involved practitioners to wait until an EHCP and special school place is agreed.

2. Childcare Sufficiency and Take up

We will continue to perform detailed trends and forecasting analysis based on:

- Population
- Number of Early Years providers and places
- Take up for 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds
- Determine impact of 2-year funded children vs non funded children and Good Level of Development (GLD) in YR
- Continue to monitor and review local provision when considering new developments. New housing may require additional places to be provided to meet demand in those localities; Section 106 funding should be considered for additional Early Years places as required.
- Carry out an audit of Early Years premises across the county to identify settings potentially vulnerable to closure or future potential premises issues. Monitor this to ensure this does not jeopardise the sustainability of provision in future.
- Implement annual monitoring through an Early Years Business risk analysis across all Early Years provision in Gloucestershire to identify vulnerability with regards to future sustainability of settings. Target settings identified for intensive business support including a full business health check.

Gloucestershire's Childcare sufficiency duty report was published in September 2022. This sets out the countywide position in relation to the availability of Early education and childcare provision.

The report concludes that there is sufficient provision for most children in most parts of the county, with a higher than national average % of good and outstanding provision, as rated by Ofsted. Some specific areas have been identified as needing an increase in childcare places and there is active work ongoing to address this.

However, the report acknowledges that there are gaps in our knowledge and ability to accurately assess whether there is a match between supply and demand for childcare places for children with SEND. National research indicates that in some parts of the county as little as 50% of children with SEND are accessing their entitlement of funded childcare/early education.

We are currently undertaking analysis work to determine how many children are currently in Reception, Yr. 1, and Yr. 2 with EHCPs who did not previously access an EY setting and/or were not known to the EY service and/or not identified by health practitioners and included in the Health to LA notification process (SEN code of practice requirement). This will help us to understand the extent to which parents are opting not to use EY provision. We can then explore if this is due to lack of childcare sufficiency for children with additional needs/SEN and/or lack of parental confidence in using universal mainstream childcare provision.

The Sufficiency Report sets out a number of other actions we are taking, some of which are included in the priorities section below.

Commissioning for Learning

In relation to specialist education places, a detailed review of projected future need is underway in response to the continuing growth in EHC Plans which has informed the bidding for new Specialist Free School proposals in October 2022.

EHC Plans have increased from around 3,000 in 2017 and have recently exceeded 5200 for the first time in 2022. This in turn is influencing demand for home to school transport (HTST), at a time when contractors are struggling to meet demand and the paucity of competition and rising inflation is driving up prices.

An external review of HTST was commissioned by EDGE Consultants to consider how best to manage the increasing demand, which reported in January 2022. It is anticipated that the arising recommendations will be implemented from 2023.

Resources

The total revised base budget (excluding the Dedicated School Grant and other grants) for Vulnerable Children (£114.4m) and Other Children's Services including Education services (£22.1m) is £136.5 million for 2022/23. The current year's forecast over-spend of £11.6m (excluding COVID related costs) is primarily against the external placements budget, due to increasing numbers of children in care and the cost of placements due to limited market availability, both of which are national issues. The MTFs proposals seek to address this underlying position coupled with a financial recovery plan overseen by senior Directors and Councillors. The net investment proposed for 2023/24 is £13.7 million in Vulnerable Children and £7.1 million in Other Children's Services, a total of £20.8 million, resulting in a proposed total budget of £157.3 million.

The proposed investment within Vulnerable Children includes funding for external placements (£7.7m with additional £1m one-off) to fund the current activity and costs, funding for the cost of agency social work staff (£0.7m one-off), additional investment to cover Disabled Children's and Young People care packages (£0.7m) and inflation funding for fostering and other allowances (£0.6m). Other Children's Services includes proposals to cover the cost pressure in Home to school transport (£4.6m) for SEN routes and the cost of procuring new routes and, additional staff to support SEND (£1.6m). Other investments cover pay inflation estimates.

Children and Families Commissioning

The main budget pressures in CCG budgets are packages of care for those children and young people who meet Continuing Care criteria and require health support and short breaks. Many agencies are not able to source staff, and for agencies who can provide staff, costs are higher. This links into wider workforce and short breaks developments. Where GCC funds services provided by the NHS, an MTFs bid proposes an inflationary increase for these services.

S17 cost pressure – A new Access to Resources Panel process is being developed which will embed Commissioning into practice and promote decision making at the heart of social work. Developments from April 2023 will include processing spend in real time, and the implementation of new DPS frame work for professional services to meet procurement requirements, as well as improving efficiencies and quality of services.

Babies born in lockdown grant obtained from COMF funding – Joint HV and C&FC programme overseen by commissioning will finish in March 2023, and we will work with current services to find support in their local area before the programme concludes.

Revenue funding of Short-break provision will be achieved within existing budget allocations. Families who are in receipt of Direct Payments have been approached to ask whether they wish to continue with their current arrangements or whether they wish the Council to commission on their behalf. It is hoped that by ‘flexing’ allocations between directly commissioned services and those bought by Direct Payments greater financial efficiencies will be achieved. The new Short-breaks framework this year will offer providers the opportunity to develop provision to offer families more choice. We have been successful in the first round of DfE respite monies, our second application has just been submitted to develop our early years offer further. In addition, applications have been submitted for the new £19.5M Children’s home capital building programme. If we are successful with a bid, it will accelerate our programme to develop residential provision in county for our children and young people.

There are no identified resources for Youth Support in the MTFS beyond current contract budgets. Providers (such as GYC, CCP, Barnardos, Prospects) these contacts will go out to tender imminently, building on the CVS community within the county.

MTFS bids submitted as the Placements budget is constantly under pressure and the overspend continues to increase month on month despite best efforts to curb expenditure. The projection is a continuation of this upward trend for the foreseeable future until an astute commissioning model is able to begin addressing some of these needs and help the County Council to achieve better economies of scale in Placements.

Moving away from unregistered Placements for u16 YP creates a problem in the current market/environment, as demand does not necessarily decline with the unavailability of unregistered placements this puts further pressure on the placements budget.

For the coming year there will be additional pressures with regard to uplift due to high inflation and possible increase in the national minimum wage, putting pressure on placement budgets. In addition to this from April 2023 the new Ofsted registration for semi- independent provision begins to come into effect, there is potential that this new regime could increase costs to meet the requirements for registration, and some providers may move out of the semi-independent market creating further capacity pressures within an already volatile and broken market.

The table below illustrates actual Placements spend to 30 September 2022

Residential	Fostering	Supported Accommodation	SEN	Support	Education	Therapy	Unregulated	Total
£9,137,226	£6,800,071	£5,295,735	£2,065,783	£1,489,284	£0	£0	£202,431	£24,989,571

SEND Service

An MTFS bid has been submitted for 23/24 and 24/25. These show the intended approach to managing demand alongside system change. The resource required for 23/24 is high, but the benefit is lower continued requirement into 24/25 and subsequent years.

We will wait for the determination by DfE if our special school free school bids are successful. Should both be successful, we can review our own capital to consider where this is best used to meet school place demand/provide alternative AP environments or support Resource Bases.

Should one or none be successful, we would look to our own capital to fund specialist provision needed in the County.

Available resources will be deployed to implement:

- SEND Quality Assurance
- Launch of the EHCP digital portal and EHCP pathway- Jan 23
- Prepare for a Local Area SEND Inspection
- Refresh EHCP/Social care pathway
- Launch non statutory funding
- Launch banded funding
- Review special school sufficiency and capital use

Commissioning for Learning Service

There is a revenue cost pressure in Home to school transport (£1.5m) predominantly for SEN routes, inflation, and the cost of procuring new routes. This is expected to rise with the ongoing growth in EHCPs

With the rising cost of capital works and no additional basic need allocations for the next two years, we expect a shortfall of circa £5m in the Schools Capital Programme by 2024/5.

- Commissioning of a new 60 place primary SEMH special school in Stroud to open in Sept 2023
- Submission of bids to the DfE under Wave 15 Free School Programme for two new 200 place MALD special schools.
- Commissioning of new 2FE primary school in Bishops Cleeve to open in 2024/25
- To prepare and publish new School Places Strategy 2023-2028
- To support potential NEETs through the Transition Panels and Transition Chats programme of work
- To provide HTST and SENTE provision in line with growing demand in a challenging tendering environment
- To develop and promote independence travel training as a traded service
- Ongoing development of trading opportunities for Admissions and FSM
- To work with ITU to support the implementation of the EDGE Report recommendations regarding improvements to transport management processes and to deliver savings in the longer term.

Outcomes and Priorities for the year

Children and Families Commissioning

In 2023/24 we are working towards delivering the following:

- Recommission integrated Youth Support contract, aligned with Family Hubs
- Maintain and monitoring youth support performance in all areas
- Lead, develop and implementation of a model of good practice across the SW to enable UASC young people to successfully settle within Gloucestershire and the SW region
- Better align CQAT with Placements Commissioning
- Retain and resource support for young adult carers via GYC for April 2022

- Recommission children's social care advocacy services (alongside adult advocacy procurement) by October 2022
- Review resource for Appropriate Adults Service for the remaining two years of the contract.
 - Deliver new direct provision Saturday Club and Holiday playscheme short break provision accessible to all areas of the County from April 2022
 - Develop a specialist Saturday Club and Holiday play scheme short break provision for children and young people with very challenging behaviour from April 2022
 - Tender the NEW Short Breaks Framework - during 2023/24
 - Develop a 2 bedded residential respite facility for children and young people with very challenging behaviour during 2023/24
 - Develop two 6 bedded homes to be run on a therapeutic model, both of which will have supported accommodation as part of the contract
 - Develop a placement portfolio of GCC through the capital programmes for the design development and delivery of, Southfield and Townsend
 - Placement Commissioning Team- mobilise and implement Care cubed
 - Implement and mobilise 28 Day Fostering/ PACE and Remand Beds with a new contract from July 2023
 - Deliver GCC new Sufficiency Strategy for the new 3 years
 - Develop a pseudo framework to deliver a multiyear opportunity to develop residential provision for young people aged 12 – 17 years
 - Development of a range of priorities in the NHS Long Term Plan
 - Delivery of priorities as outlined in the NHS England CYP Transformation Programme
 - Recommissioning of the C&FCs into a locality focused Family Hub model
 - Extend Vulnerable Women's Project for a further year
 - Explore the retendering of the Welfare Fund and FSM support
 - Deliver efficiencies on the S17 Access to Resources Panel
 - Develop and roll out the school improvement project model to increase pace and impact of school intervention activity
 - Implement the new Virtual School Improvement plan to improve the impact of the service on educational outcomes for CIC, including the roll out of the E-PEP record to the schools' system
 - Explore and embed a corporate grandparent offer for care leavers who become parents
 - Deliver the HAF programme
 - Deliver FSM's holiday provision
 - Develop an offer for children and young people under the age of 13 who are affected by Domestic abuse
 - To explore and deliver on an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion agenda across the Children's Hub
 - To deliver a parent champion model aimed at our most disadvantaged communities and target groups that will align with Family Hubs on commencement of contracts
 - To rollout the digitalisation programme for EHCP casework alongside longer term practice changes around EHCP assessment processes
 - To re-shape the Educational Psychology Service to meet statutory, traded and WER demand within budget
 - To review the SEND Local offer, including the coproduction work with the Future Me YP Ambassadors

- To progress the transformation of the Alternative Provision service to a unified service in appropriate accommodation for primary and secondary provision
- To provide HTST and SENTE provision in line with demand in a challenging tendering environment
- To restructure Traded services to ensure a MAT offer and services operating within revenue
- To maintain Early Years' sufficiency against national factors such as the ending of furlough and changes to national minimum wage on patterns of demand and provider capacity/sustainability.
- To manage EY sector needs arising from commissioning activity either underway or about to commence linked to Family hubs, Children and Families Centres
- Continue with Direct payments
- Continue with the Innovation project- short breaks
- Continue with delivery of the Household Support Fund
- Devise an options appraisal for a new delivery model for Gloucestershire

Early Years' Service

The aim of the EY service is to improve outcomes and reduce inequalities for all children aged 0-5 years by addressing the following priorities:

- Ensure all children have access to high quality early years' education/childcare provision.
- Have systems in place to identify and support children with additional needs/SEN as early as possible, providing a higher level of intervention for children with the most complex needs.
- Have systems, processes, and practices in place that support children to prepare for school and to develop the fundamental skills for learning.
- Support good transitions to school and supporting schools to ensure that children receive good quality teaching, learning and play experiences in their reception year enabling them to be safely included and to make good progress
- Ensure that our most vulnerable children (pre-birth to 5) have access to, and confidence in, universal and targeted provision within their communities to enable parents to be confident in supporting their child's development, and giving all children the best start in life

These priorities also help to meet the Health and Wellbeing key areas of responsive parenting, childhood poverty, school readiness and vulnerable children.

Actions to achieve the above priority aims are:

Attainment, disparities and narrowing the gap

- Commission the delivery and review the impact of a specialist SEND childcare and assessment provision.
- Pilot and extend communication and language pathway to identify and respond children at risk of or presenting with emerging language/communication delay.
- Develop and share a range of toolkits for EY practitioners to use to support communication and language development
- Continue to provide a range of training and support to the EY and childcare sector to improve quality of inclusive practice
- Implement new Tier 3 multi-agency planning group for children with complex needs

- Monitor fixed term and permanent exclusions of children aged 2-7 years to identify gaps/missed opportunities for early identification
- Identify schools with low % of children attaining GLD, identify EY feeder settings, explore locality support available (universal offer), identify gaps, and missed opportunities
- As above for children eligible for FSM
- As above for Black Caribbean children and Black Caribbean/White children
- Offer EYFS quality assurance (Moderation) to schools scoring below national average, those in the lowest scoring cohort, those with high numbers of children eligible for FSM and from BAME groups and those with the biggest FSM and ethnicity gaps
- Identify individual children with achieving below expected levels and review evidence and judgements
- Offer a range of training, support, and resources to well established PVI groups to enable them to provide effective parenting support, identification of emerging needs and signposting for targeted support
- Deliver 6 Parent/Baby/toddler PEEP groups across Gloucester city
- Identify gaps in county for parent/baby/toddler support groups
- Work with PVI sector to address gaps, and/or set up GCC led groups where needed

Sufficiency and take up:

- Develop systems and processes to monitor and assess demand and sufficiency of childcare for children with SEND
- Analyse the take up of early education/childcare entitlement for children with EHCPs now in Reception, Yr1 and Yr2
- Promote early education entitlement for Asylum seeking children
- Use data from the provider self-update portal to ensure that childcare provision across the county is accessible to and meets the cultural needs of children from all ethnic backgrounds
- Conduct specific consultation with parents from a range of ethnic backgrounds to understand if there are any barriers to accessing childcare provision and if there is consistent experience of settings understanding and responding to the cultural beliefs and needs of children from all ethnic backgrounds
- Develop an effective system to collect parental feedback regarding access to childcare and take up of funded places
- Complete a Childcare Sufficiency Assessment report annually to reflect the county position
- Liaise with the School Place planning team to identify all proposed housing developments, calculating estimated number of additional EY places needed, develop options appraisals to increase EY places where necessary
- Closely monitor the childcare market, impact of covid, identify any areas of concern and options to increase lost places as appropriate
- Develop and implement a targeted approach to increase the take up of 2-year-old funding from April 2022