

**Children and Families Service 2016-17 Full Year Report to Members****KEY DECISION NO. CACH O31****MEETING DATE 2017/2018****Cabinet****23 October 2017****Council****25 October 2017****CLASSIFICATION:****Open****If exempt, the reason will be listed in the main body of this report.****WARD(S) AFFECTED****All Wards****CABINET MEMBER****Cllr Bramble****Deputy Mayor****KEY DECISION****Yes****REASON****Affects Two or More Wards****GROUP DIRECTOR****Anne Canning – Children, Adults and Community Health**



## **1. CABINET MEMBER'S INTRODUCTION**

I have requested this report from the Group Director for Children, Adults and Community Health Directorate. My role as Lead Member for Children's Services requires me to ensure that the Local Authority fulfils its legal responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people in Hackney. As such, I wish to ensure that services with the important mandate of protecting Hackney's most vulnerable children and young people from risk of harm are understood across all areas of the Council. Case studies and direct quotes from children and young people are included in the report to help Members get a better picture of the services provided.

## **2. GROUP DIRECTOR'S INTRODUCTION**

Children's services in Hackney work in partnership to protect children and keep them safe from harm and help them thrive. The Children and Families' Service is the key service designed to protect children by working with families to support safe and effective parenting where children are at risk of significant harm. Where it is not possible for children to be safely cared for within their family network, the local authority will look after those children. This full year report provides Members with oversight of activities within the Children and Families' Service including performance updates and information about key service developments and information about vulnerable adolescents and adoption. The report also includes information on Young Hackney, the Council's early help, prevention and diversion service for children and young people aged 6-19 years old and up to 25 years if the young person has a special education need or disability. Information on the Service's work with children and young people through Hackney Gets Heard (Hackney's Children in Care Council) is included in the report as well as feedback from children and young people throughout the report.

## **3. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

**Cabinet is asked to:**

- **Endorse the report.**
- **Take note of information held within the report.**
- **Recommend this report to Council.**

**Council is recommended to:**

- **Note the report.**

#### **4. REASONS FOR DECISION**

The report is for information and endorsement only

#### **5. DETAILS OF ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

Not applicable.

#### **6. BACKGROUND**

This report summarises progress against priority areas for the service.

##### **6.1 Policy Context**

This report summarises progress against priority areas for the service.

##### **6.2 Equality Impact Assessment**

There are no new decisions within the report that require an Equality Impact Assessment.

##### **6.3 Sustainability**

There are no issues within the report that impact on the physical and social environment.

##### **6.4 Consultations**

The report does not contain any issues or decisions that require consultation

##### **6.5 Risk Assessment**

There are no proposals for action that require a risk assessment.

#### **7. COMMENTS OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND CORPORATE RESOURCES**

7.1 This annual report covers the period 2016/17. The outturn for 2016/17 for Children and Families Service on a net budget of £56.8m was a slight underspend of £25k after use of grants and reserves of £3.7m including a drawdown on the Commissioning Reserve of £1.9m. There has been a requirement to draw down from the Commissioning Reserve since 2012/13 due to the increased number of children in care and a shortage of in-house foster carers.

7.2 Bringing the financial position up to date, for 2017/18, against a net budget of £56m the Children and Families Service is forecasting an overspend of £287k (as at August 2017) after an assumed use of reserves and drawdown of grant of £4.7m, including full use of the Commissioning Activity Reserve of £2.5m.

- 7.3 Commissioning costs have been increasing since 2012/13 driven by an increase in the number of looked after children alongside the change in the profile of care placements. There is a continuation of a large proportion of children being placed with independent foster agencies (IFAs) due to a lack of suitable in-house foster carers. The marginal cost of an IFA placement is significantly greater than that of an in-house placement. Hackney has a strategy in place to recruit and retain in-house foster carers and was successful in reaching recruitment targets last year, however this has not yet translated into a significant increase in in-house foster placements and improvements are not expected to be significant in the short to medium term. There has been a significant increase in residential placements since 2015 adding considerable budget pressures with an average weekly unit cost of £3.5k. There is also pressure from an increase in the number of young people placed in semi-independent accommodation in both the 16-18 and the 18+ age categories. These pressures have been recognised by the Group Director - Finance & Corporate Resources with a total growth of £4.3m included in the base budget between 2012/13 to 2017/18.
- 7.4 The Children in Need Service is forecasting an overspend of £585k for 2017/18 arising partly from a number of vacant posts being covered by agency staff (recruitment activity is taking place to fill these posts) and partly as a result of legal costs incurred in this area whilst budgets sit centrally in the Directorate and where there is a corresponding underspend.
- 7.5 The Overstaying Families Intervention Team (OFIT) is forecasted to overspend by £63k for 2017/18 after use of available reserves due to a high level of Section 17 spend forecast based upon client numbers. It is anticipated that this will reduce as a result of the Home Office now prioritising applications where families are receiving financial support from the local authority.
- 7.6 Young Hackney are forecast to underspend by a total of £247k. This is due to combination of vacant posts, delayed recruitment and some employees opting out of the pension scheme.
- 7.7 The Domestic Abuse Intervention Service (DAIS) is forecast to overspend by £90k (after use of reserves) due to a budget shortfall when the service transferred to the Children and Families Service from the Chief Executive's directorate in April 2017.
- 7.8 The Children and Families Service has continued to make significant contributions to the efficiency agenda of the Council. Over the previous seven years the services have delivered £10.1m savings with further £0.9m being delivered in 2017/18.

## **8. COMMENTS OF THE INTERIM DIRECTOR OF LEGAL**

- 8.1 Legal services have been consulted on the preparation of this report and have considered the contents and confirm that they reflect the position of the law presently.

- 8.2 The report to Cabinet sets out how the Children and Families Service in Hackney is undertaking its statutory functions towards children, young people and their families in the local authority area.
- 8.3 There continues to be a number of external challenges which face local authority children's services nationwide, however the report clearly sets out these challenges and how they have been addressed in the London Borough of Hackney.
- 8.4 The Children and Social work Act 2017 was given Royal Assent on the 27<sup>th</sup> April 2017. The local authority therefore need to ensure that the provisions of the act are considered and implemented in accordance with the statutory functions of the local authority. The Act sets out corporate parenting principles for the council as a whole to be the best parent it can be to children in its care. These principles are largely a collation of existing duties local authorities have towards looked after children and those leaving care.
- 8.5 Local authorities will be required to publish the support they offer to care leavers and to promote the educational attainment of children who have been adopted or placed in other long-term arrangements.
- 8.6 The legislation, also amongst other things, extends the current considerations of the court when making decisions about the long-term placement of children to include an assessment of current and future needs and of any relationship with the prospective adopter.

## APPENDICES

The Children and Families Service 2016-17 Full Year Report to Members

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

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