

Children and Families Service 2017-18 Full Year Report to Members

CABINET MEETING DATE (2019/20) 16th October 2019	CLASSIFICATION: Open If exempt, the reason will be listed in the main body of this report.
WARD(S) AFFECTED All Wards	
CABINET MEMBER Cllr Anntoinette Bramble Deputy Mayor	
KEY DECISION No	
GROUP DIRECTOR Group Director 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 of Tomorrow (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

This annual report covers the period 2018/19. The outturn for 2018/19 for the Children and Families Service on a net budget of £58m was an overspend of £362k after use of grants and reserves of £4.2m including a drawdown on the Commissioning Reserve of £3m. 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.

The financial position for 2019/20 is a net budget of £58.4m for the Children and Families Service, and the service is forecasting to overspend by £1m (as at August 2019), after use of reserves and drawdown of grants totalling £5.8m (including full use of the commissioning activity reserve of £2.3m). The main budget pressures are in

relation to looked after children (LAC) placements within Corporate Parenting, young people held on remand within Youth Justice and staffing in several areas across the services.

The increase in commissioning costs has been driven by an increase in the number of looked after children since 2011/12, and this trend looks to continue through 2019/20. In particular, there has been an increase in residential placements since 2015 adding considerable budget pressures with an average annual unit cost of £200k.

We are also seeing a rise in the number of under 18s in high-cost semi-independent placements. Where young people in their late teens are deemed to be vulnerable, and in many cases are transitioning from residential to semi-independent placements, they may still require a high-level of support and in extreme circumstances bespoke crisis packages.

There are a number of service initiatives in place which alongside improving the experience for young people are aimed at containing the cost pressure in these areas of high unit cost. These include the Family Learning Intervention Project, specific edge of care workers and the cross-borough residential project. The impact of these will be monitored on an ongoing basis.

There remains a large proportion of children being placed with independent fostering agencies (IFAs) due to a shortage of suitable in-house foster carers. The cost of an IFA placement is significantly greater than that of an In-house placement. The service continues to work to recruit more in-house foster carers including a project with ICT colleagues which has seen the webpage overhauled and simplification of the application process.

The pressures in the service have been recognised by the Group Director - Finance & Corporate Resources with a total growth of £7.4m included in the base budget between 2012/13 to 2019/20.

The Children and Families Service has continued to make significant contributions to the efficiency agenda of the Council. Over the previous eight years the service has delivered £11.3m savings with a further £0.2m being delivered in 2019/20.

8. VAT Implications on Land & Property Transactions

There are no VAT implications in this report.

9. COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR, LEGAL & GOVERNANCE SERVICES

The report raises no specific legal issues, but Legal Services will assist in providing advice, should specific issues arise.

APPENDICES

The Children and Families Service 2018/19 Full Year Report to Members.

EXEMPT

Open.

BACKGROUND PAPER

None.

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