

# Title of report: Children's Improvement Plan Transformation Funding

**Meeting: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

**Meeting date: Tuesday 14 February 2023**

**Report by: Darryl Freeman, Corporate Director - Children & Young People**

## **Classification**

Open

## **Decision type**

This is not an executive decision

## **Wards affected**

(All Wards);

## **Purpose**

To review the use of £11.49m from the Financial Resilience Reserve which was made available to support resourcing the transformation stage of children's services.

## **Recommendation**

**That:**

- a) **That the contents of this report are noted by the Children and Young People scrutiny committee**

## **Alternative options**

1. Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee could choose not to review information contained in this report; this is not recommended as the Children's Improvement Plan is one of the council's priorities.

## **Key considerations**

2. On 31 March 2022, [Cabinet approved](#) £11.49m Resilience Reserve funding to assist the improvement of Children's Services.

3. The recommendation was for funding to be allocated in two tranches, the first tranche of £5m and a further tranche of £6.49m have subsequently been released.
4. At the time funding was agreed it was noted that core transformation of the service is expected to take a number of years before a level of sustained and sustainable improvement is achieved and that this aimed at:
  - a. Improving outcomes for children, young people and their families.
  - b. Making working in Herefordshire an attractive and rewarding career choice.
  - c. Embedding systemic partnership approaches and exploring alternative models of delivery.

All underpinned and driven by improvement across the system of practice, management, and leadership.

5. A Resource Board has been established, chaired by the Director of Resources and Assurance, to track and scrutinise spending.
6. Both the Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet have received progress reports in respect of the Improvement Plan and the funding as requested since April 2022.
7. A current progress report of the Improvement Plan is tabled as a separate agenda item at this Scrutiny Committee.
8. Scrutiny and Cabinet was previously advised that the investment will be used to increase staffing resources; both interim and permanent.
9. In respect of interim recruitment, the investment has allowed interim staff to be deployed across a number of areas:
  - a. Additional social work teams to manage the increase in demand during 2022/23
  - b. Auditors, Improvement Leads and Practice Develop Leads
  - c. Two additional Heads of Service (Fostering and Quality Assurance)
  - d. Data and Systems Analyst
  - e. Additional Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs)
  - f. Managing Practitioners across the service
  - g. Service Managers across the service
  - h. Additional management and worker capacity in the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub
  - i. Funding to scope and implement Trauma Awareness Training being part of the learning offer
  - j. Scoping and commissioning of Family Group Conferences pending permanent recruitment
10. Following the most recent [Ofsted inspection](#) that took place between 18 and 29 July 2022, the decision was made to ring-fence £1million specifically to assist the council to respond specifically to some of the areas highlighted by Ofsted.
11. This included amongst others the appointment of an interim Service Director Improvement, an interim Head of Service to focus on Fostering, dedicated resource to review and update policies and procedures and additional capacity for Business and Performance Analysts to assist in the development of the Mosaic system and reporting.
12. As of the 19 January of this ring-fenced £1million it is forecasted that £527,000 will be spend by the end of the current financial year.
13. The remaining £473,000 has been set aside to be carried forward into 2023/24 to enable the continuation of key posts to support the response to Ofsted.

14. Of the remaining funds, £10.49million, there will be a forecasted underspend of £688,337 at the end of the current financial year. It is proposed that these monies will be returned to Resilience Reserve.
15. Progress in respect of improvement has been tracked by and has been reported to Scrutiny, Cabinet and the Improvement Board and the finances in respect of the £11.49 funding has been scrutinised and tracked by the Director of Resources and Assurance through a dedicated Resource Board.
16. The funding has been invaluable to our current improvement journey

## **Community impact**

17. The notice requiring improvement has a direct and indirect effect on the lives of both current and future children and families in Herefordshire.
18. The County Plan 2020–2024 includes the ambition to ‘strengthen communities to ensure everyone lives well and safely together’. Specifically, the council aims to:
  - a. Ensure all children are healthy, safe, and inspired to achieve;
  - b. Ensure that children in care, and moving on from care, are well supported and make good life choices; and
  - c. Protect and improve the lives of vulnerable people. Set out any considerations relating to community impact including contribution made to corporate plan / health and wellbeing strategy or other local or national strategies or policies.

## **Environmental Impact**

19. There are no specific environmental impacts arising from this report.

## **Equality duty**

20. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the ‘general duty’ on public authorities is set out as follows:
21. A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –
  - a. eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - b. advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - c. foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
22. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying ‘due regard’ in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. Whilst this is an update to the scrutiny committees and will in itself have minimal equalities impacts,

consideration has been made in the consideration of Executive decisions and the Executive Responses provided by the Cabinet.

### Resource implications

23. The costs and resource implications in respect of the monies made available from Resilience Reserve funding has previously been considered by Cabinet.

### Legal implications

24. The Council was issued with a statutory direction by the Department for Education on 21 September 2022. To comply with this notice, the Council must adhere to a number of measures, which includes complying with any instructions of the Secretary of State or the Children's Services Commissioner in relation to the improvement of the council's exercise of its children's social care functions.
25. If there is a failure to comply with this notice or should ministers not be satisfied with the council's progress at any stage, ministers may choose to invoke their statutory powers of intervention (s497A Education Act 1996) to direct the council to enter into an appropriate arrangement to secure the improvements required in children's services.

### Risk management

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
There is a risk that we would not be able to recruit permanently to posts resulting in potential potential instability and increased cost during 2022/23 which could adversely impact on our ability to improve with pace.	A recruitment campaign has commenced and will continue throughout the year. Interim staff are encouraged to apply for permanent posts or where appropriate be offered fixed term contracts.
There is a risk that a significantly adverse report from Ofsted following an inspection in the future might place additional demands on the improvement and transformation activity.	The service, through the activity and impact of the Improvement Plan and in collaboration with the Improvement Advisor, the Commissioner and partners continues to work to demonstrate impact and evidence of improvement and to prepare our best evidence for a future inspection.

### Consultees

26. There has been no public consultation on this paper

### Appendices

None

### Background papers

None identified

## Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

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Approved by	Darryl Freeman	Date	02/02/2023
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