

Children, Education & Families Business Strategy

2015/16 – 2017/18

Introduction

2015/16 is the second year of the four-year directorate business strategies agreed by Council in February 2014. These build on the previous strategies agreed in 2011.

Sustained reductions in Government funding combined with pressure to restrict Council Tax increases have resulted in a significant squeeze on Council resources over recent years, at a time when demand for services has been increasing. The Corporate Plan for 2014/15 sets out that taken together over the period 2010/11 to 2017/18 the Council plans to save £265m to offset funding reductions and to meet additional expenditure pressures.

In September 2014, Cabinet agreed that given the uncertainties over future levels of government funding due to the forthcoming General Election, the medium term planning period would not be extended beyond 2017/18 with limited adjustments made to the existing Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) to reflect any changes to spending assumptions or new pressures arising in 2014/15.

On-going expenditure pressures that were not anticipated when the 2014/15 to 2017/18 Medium Term Financial Plan was agreed have been highlighted in the Financial Monitoring and Business Strategy Delivery reports to Cabinet throughout 2014/15. Taken together with other future corporate and directorate pressures these total £23m over the period 2015/16 to 2017/18. Additional savings of £27m over that period are planned to manage these pressures. This updated strategy reflects those additional pressures and explains the additional savings that will be required to manage those.

Children, Education and Families Directorate Overview

The Children, Education & Families vision is for Oxfordshire to be the best place in England for children and young people to grow up, by working with every child and young person to develop the skills, confidence and opportunities they need to achieve their full potential.

We want Oxfordshire to be a 'thriving Oxfordshire'. This means a place where people can work to achieve a decent life for themselves and their family, a place alive with vibrant, active communities and a place where people can enjoy the rewards of a growing economy and feel safe.

We have an overarching responsibility to work with partners to improve the well-being of children and young people, and to reduce inequalities between them. Our statutory duties fall into four main areas:

1. Safeguarding

We work with partners to make arrangements to ensure that all our functions are discharged with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. In particular, we ensure that there are clear and effective arrangements to protect children and young people from harm.

The independent Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board coordinates the effectiveness of arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in the County.

2. Vulnerable children and young people

We work with partners to understand local need and secure provision of services that promote prevention and early intervention and offer early help to children, young people and families so that emerging problems are dealt with before they become more serious.

We also act as effective and caring 'corporate parents' for looked after children, with key roles in improving their educational attainment, providing stable and high quality placements and proper planning for when they leave care. We also ensure that disabled children and those with special educational needs (SEN) can access high quality provision that meets their needs and fund provision for children with statements of SEN.

We ensure arrangements are in place for alternative provision for children outside mainstream education or missing education (for example due to permanent exclusion or illness) to receive suitable full-time education. We also ensure that there is coherent planning between all agencies providing services for children involved in the youth justice system (including those leaving custody), secure the provision of education for young people in custody and ensure that safeguarding responsibilities are effectively carried out.

3. Educational provision

We promote the interests of children, young people, parents and families and work with local communities to stimulate and support a diversity of school, early years and 16 to 19 provision that meets local needs. We promote participation in education or training of young people, including by securing provision for young people aged 16 - 19 (or 25 for those with learning difficulties or disabilities). This includes ensuring fair access to all schools for every child in accordance with the statutory School Admissions and School Admissions Appeal Codes and ensuring appropriate information is provided to parents, and suitable provision for suitable home to school transport arrangements.

We actively promote a diverse supply of strong schools, including by encouraging good schools to expand and, where there is a need for a new school, seeking proposals for an academy or free school. We also need to promote high quality early years provision, including helping to develop the market, securing free early education for all three and four year olds and for all disadvantaged two year olds. This includes providing information, advice and assistance to parents and prospective parents, and ensuring there are sufficient children's centre services to meet local need and sufficient childcare for working parents. We also promote children and young people's participation in public decision-making so they can influence local decisions about services.

4. Educational excellence

We work with head teachers, school governors and academy sponsors and principals to promote educational excellence for all children and young people and make sure they are ambitious in tackling underperformance. We support maintained schools in delivering an appropriate National Curriculum and early years providers in meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (as outlined in the EYFS Statutory Framework).

Where necessary we take rapid and decisive action in relation to poorly performing schools, including using powers of intervention with regard to maintained schools and considering alternative structural and operational solutions. We develop robust school improvement strategies, and promote high standards in education by supporting effective school-to-school collaboration. We also provide local leadership for tackling issues needing attention which cut across more than one school, for example poor performance in a particular subject area across a cluster of schools.

Delivering the council's corporate priorities

Thriving economy

The proportion of Oxfordshire GCSE students achieving at least five A*- C grades including English and Maths has overtaken the national average for the first time in four years and performance in reading, writing and mathematics for seven and eleven year olds continues to broadly be in line with the national figure. This suggests the council's education strategy is having a positive impact, although our performance has still not reached the aspirations the council, pupils, parents and schools hold. A Strategy for Change – Improving Educational Outcomes in Oxfordshire' sets out a clear vision for Oxfordshire to be a dynamic and forward looking place for education and learning, providing the best quality experiences for children and young people to grow up, learn, develop and achieve, and we will continue to work closely with a range of partners to ensure it is implemented effectively.

Support for the vulnerable

Giving children a good start in life will prevent many problems from ever occurring. Where issues do occur we are committed to providing early help in order to avoid problems escalating and family needs becoming more complex. Our early intervention service, currently provided through hubs and children's centres across the county, is an important element of our targeted prevention approach. The service brings together previously separate teams to give coordinated support to children and young people who are at risk of not having good outcomes. A wide range of partner organisations refer individuals to the service and support its provision of whole family, integrated services. Early intervention is closely linked to supporting better educational outcomes and ensuring a good start in life, particularly through targeted work with young and vulnerable parents.

Steps are being taken to promote even closer working between the Early Intervention Service and Children's Social Care the first of which means that with effect from January 2015 both services will report to the same Deputy Director.

Children's social care will continue to focus on protecting children at risk of harm or neglect and tackling, as well as preventing, cases of child sexual exploitation.

We have made considerable investments in frontline children's social care services to ensure we have sufficient capacity to maintain high standards and ensure children and young people are appropriately safeguarded. A joint resource (the Kingfisher team) is now well established specifically to focus on child sexual exploitation is a demonstration of our commitment, and we will continue working with the police and health – as well as other key partners such as Oxfordshire's district councils and its voluntary sector – to

extend the reach of this team. The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is now open and provides an all-important first port of call for children's safeguarding issues and will be expanded in due course to cater for adult referrals.

Thriving people and communities

There is a national focus on helping the most disadvantaged and challenged families to turn their lives around. The Thriving Families programme works with these families to reduce worklessness, antisocial behaviour, crime and school exclusions and to increase school attendance. The key focus is on our most resource intensive and vulnerable families with the aim of reducing the numbers needing the type of support offered by social care. This continues to be a vital strand in the on-going work locally to narrow the gap in outcomes that exists across the county.

How we work to deliver these priorities

We are rolling out a programme of agile working in order to support the new ways of working necessary to deliver these priorities. Agile working means: giving staff the right equipment and working environment to suit their role and service; working in a more flexible way that makes best use of staff time, buildings, and resources; and taking advantage of changes in technology and working styles to become more efficient. This will ultimately protect delivery of front line services as far as possible.

For example, staff are able to work flexibly from a number of different offices across the county, to reduce travel time and increase efficiency. A number of health services are delivered from Children's Centres, and staff from the council and partner organisations are co-locating in early intervention hubs. This approach will be further extended as we develop the MASH still further, co-locating partners including Adults Services, the Fire Service and Trading Standards, Oxford Health and Thames Valley Police.

Services and Priorities

What has already been achieved?

The Children, Education and Families Directorate is a well-regarded and highly valued service, with overall performance outcomes that are good and consistently good or outstanding Ofsted judgements. Standards of reading, writing and mathematics in primary

schools continue to broadly be in line with national figures and the proportion of GCSE students achieving at least five A*- C grades including English and Maths is now above the national average. There continues to be a significant improvement in the number of children taught in schools which are judged to be good or outstanding by Ofsted, with an additional 4320 children taught in such schools by the end of the 2013/14 academic year.

Since April 2012 the directorate has made substantial savings from the non-schools budget, but is now facing significant increased demand for children's social care services, which will require service redesign to address the consequent budget pressure.

Children's social care is working with slightly higher numbers of children than similar authorities, and activity levels are increasing. In the last 18 months the most striking increase has been in the numbers of children looked after which has increased by 26% in 18 months between April 2013 and October 2014. This included a 75% increase in non-Oxfordshire County Council care homes; a 30% increase in independent living and a 20% increase in foster care.

Our Strategy and Approach

The key elements of the strategy are:

- 1) Keeping children safe from harm and especially those at risk of exploitation
- 2) Establishing the right balance of universal and targeted services to be able to manage demand for services
- 3) Embedding the most effective way to provide early help to children, young people and families
- 4) Supporting schools, academies, early years settings and other agencies to continue to raise achievement
- 5) Ensuring good access to the right support at the right time
- 6) Encouraging a positive experience of the transition from childhood to adulthood.
- 7) Developing a balance of services provided by public, private and voluntary sector organisations

1) Keeping children safe from harm and especially those at risk of exploitation

Protecting the most vulnerable children and young people is an overriding priority for the council and its partners. We perform well in terms of timeliness of initial assessments, core assessments, holding of child protection case conferences with solid multi-agency safeguarding and child protection practice. However, children being looked after by the council are currently being placed too far away from home, in many cases out of the County. We will deliver our new placement strategy

that has been developed to ensure these children can live closer to home, to make it easier to keep contact with relatives and for them to move back home as soon as it is appropriate to do so.

Child sexual exploitation is a significant issue in Oxfordshire and elsewhere. We are working hard to keep our children and young people safe from abuse. We will continue to build on existing work with partners, including development of the new multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) and extending the reach of the Kingfisher team – a multi-agency team providing an initial point of contact for advice and information to families, children and other professionals where there are concerns about child sexual exploitation.

2) Establishing the right balance of universal and targeted services to be able to manage demand for services

Where possible, the provision of universal services free at the point of delivery has been retained. Increasingly however it is recognised that the work of our services needs to be targeted to those in greatest need. Children who have a statement of special educational needs are well supported but outcomes need to improve for those children identified as in need. For young people with disabilities, we will streamline assessments, provide personal budgets, make information and advice more readily available and have a more joined up approach between education, health and social services.

The Thriving Families programme works intensively with families over a sustained period of time to bring lifestyle changes in the family. The number of families who receive intensive support will increase and a whole family approach developed through the Thriving Families programme will be extended as part of the wider review of children's services.

3) Embedding the most effective way to provide early help to children, young people and families

All services need to support children and families early enough to ensure the right support at the right time, without delay, to prevent any escalation of needs. The Early Intervention Service is targeted at vulnerable children and those with complex needs and we shall ensure even closer liaison with children's social care. A mix of children's centres and other provision is accessible to families and is delivered from a variety of venues including schools. As we focus more on our statutory responsibilities, an increasingly important part of our strategy is to increase the role of other organisations in delivering early help, across the public sector but also by developing voluntary sector engagement.

4) Supporting schools, academies, early years settings and other agencies to continue to raise achievement

We are reviewing the way support is provided to schools and settings to reflect changes in responsibilities for schools and the county council and to improve outcomes for children and young people. About half of secondary schools are now academies and more academies are expected in the medium term, but the council retains overall responsibility for educational performance and quality.

Our focus will be on improving the number of good and outstanding schools and settings, as this is an important factor influencing the overall educational attainment of children. We will also continue to focus on the quality of teaching and learning, giving greater attention to vulnerable learners, improving reading and improving performance at GCSE level.

5) Ensuring good access to the right support at the right time

Families need easier access to support and to get the help they need when they need it. They need a consistent and co-ordinated response no matter which door they knock on. We will increase personalisation, streamline assessments, have a more joined up approach between education, health and social services, provide personal budgets (if requested) and make information and advice more readily available.

6) Encouraging a positive experience of the transition from childhood to adulthood

We will work across the council to ensure smooth transitions from Children's to Adult Services. We will ensure that eligible young adults receive personalised support which improves their outcomes, and the capacity of those with more complex needs to be cared for within their local communities. Children's and Adult Services will continue to work together to ensure that disabled young people with mental health needs and challenging behaviour are cared for locally wherever possible, and that robust monitoring arrangements are in place to safeguard and protect young adults who are placed in specialist out of area placements outside Oxfordshire.

7) Developing a balance of services provided by public, private and voluntary sector organisations

The majority of services for children are provided by public sector agencies – the county council and the NHS. Approximately a tenth of spend is through contracts with non- statutory organisations providing a range of services from individual placements through to respite care and Children's Centres.

To enable families to have greater choice we will work to develop a vibrant and high quality market for services for children and families. Good quality will be maximised through commissioning expertise and effective contract management. Improved choice is likely to extend to the development of personal budgets in the future.

Overview of other strategic plans

The Health and Wellbeing Board is a partnership between local government, the NHS and the people of Oxfordshire. It includes local GPs, councillors, Healthwatch Oxfordshire, and senior local government officers. The board has been set up to ensure that we work together to improve everyone's health and wellbeing, especially those who have health problems or are in difficult circumstances. The board provides strategic leadership for health and wellbeing across the county and is responsible for the development of Oxfordshire's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

This Strategy contains priorities of direct relevance to Children, Education and Families, and that are in keeping with the strategic direction set out above, including ensuring all children have a healthy start in life and stay healthy into adulthood; narrowing the gap for our most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups; keeping all children and young people safe; and raising achievement for all children and young people.

The Children and Young People's Plan 2013-2014 is in the process of being updated, and will be available early in 2015. It has been developed by the Children and Young People's Partnership Board, on which the council is a key partner. It is a partnership plan that sets out the strategic direction for future services for children, young people and families in Oxfordshire, and how organisations will work together to improve outcomes.

The Children and Young People's Plan reflects the joint strategic vision from the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board, and contains the same vision and strategic priorities outlined above. The plan also draws on other key strategies from the city and district councils and the county council (including the Education Strategy and Placement Strategy) as well as the Operating Plan from the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group.

How our services are changing

In future, we will continue to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, whilst ensuring the services are delivered as efficiently as possible. We will also ensure there is high quality educational provision in the county, and that there is appropriate support available to children, young people and families when they need it.

However, to make the necessary savings we will focus on what we are required to do by legislation, regulation or policy. We will support but no longer be a provider of universal services, focusing on ensuring that services are targeted to those in greatest need.

We are already delivering a number of savings previously agreed, and changed the way that some services are delivered. These include efficiencies in the way early help is delivered through early intervention hubs, reducing management and administration costs in children's centres, reviewing how school improvement and foundation learning is delivered, and working with providers to reduce the cost of home to school transport.

In summary, our further proposals for 2014-15 to 2017-18 are as follows:

Development of an Integrated Children's Social Care and Early Intervention Service

We are continuing to review all of the services we provide for children and families. The aim of this review will be to find innovative ways to save money whilst at the same time maintaining frontline services, and to bring forward proposals to be implemented in the 2017/18 financial year.

We will be seeking to make better links between early intervention services, children's centres and children's social care to create a more cohesive all-round service that improves outcomes for children and young people. We will also be focusing on improving the experience of children and young people and their families from needing care and support to receiving it, and transitioning between services where necessary.

The review will also focus on ways of working with partner organisations and the community to explore new ways of delivering services, such as increased use of volunteers, or new sources of funding. We are already working with health commissioners and providers to develop more joined up services and improved timely access to those services. This might mean the joining up of

teams and budgets in localities, and includes the new autism residential academy as a way of providing the right support locally for those with the most severe and complex needs.

Education Services (including Schools & Learning and Foundation Years)

We will change the way that a number of non-statutory education services are delivered, in response to the changing relationships and responsibilities for schools and the council and the need to find more efficient ways of working. This includes different ways to deliver the Foundation Learning Service, which provides support for the education of 0 to 5 year-olds, and to avoid duplication with other services.

Management of issues relating to the attendance of pupils at school is increasingly transferring from local authorities to individual schools across the country, especially as more schools convert to academy status and are therefore independent from local authority control. We will therefore reduce the existing Attendance Service, but continue to fulfil our legal obligations to manage cases where a pupil is regularly not attending school.

We are already implementing a planned reduction in our school improvement services, in line with central government direction to promote the role of school to school support. Increasingly, the good practice promoted within the variety of projects that we currently fund is being embedded in schools, as demonstrated by improved attainment and the number of schools rated good or outstanding by Ofsted. We have worked with schools to set up their own improvement networks and partnerships, and the increasing autonomy of schools will result in schools working with each other, bidding for external funding and sharing pooled funding for future projects. Any additional developments that schools wish to continue will be funded by school partnerships, and where projects have had an impact on improved outcomes we will strive to share this practice and to identify those schools who can champion these approaches.

Children's Social Care

As part of our Placement Strategy, we are committed to ensuring children being looked after by the council live as close to home as possible. This has benefits for the young people and their families in staying in contact, and making it easier for them to return home as soon as it is appropriate. We will therefore be investing in four new Children's homes in Oxfordshire, which will also reduce the cost of placements to the council as out of county placements are higher cost than placements within the county.

We will also improve outcomes for children, young people and their families by streamlining services between Early Intervention and Children's Social Care and by working more closely with partner agencies. The reshaping of Children's Services will help us implement the Placement Strategy, promote the use of family based services and permanency of placements, and to make better use of early help services. We will deliver more joined-up services that improve the experiences of young people who need and receive care, and reduce duplication and the amount of 'hand-overs' between different services and professionals.

Additional funding for staffing for the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub

We shall continue to work with partners including the Thames Valley Police, Oxford Health, Adults Services, the Fire Service and Trading Standards to further enhance the work of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). It will lead to improved outcomes for children by co-locating key safeguarding agencies, by enabling better information sharing and decision making, identification of risk at the earliest possible opportunity, appropriate early and holistic interventions, and a coordinated, effective and timely response. We will invest to make sure that qualified and experienced staff are available within the MASH to provide appropriate support and decision making.

Disability and Special Educational Needs

We will continue to focus on keeping children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) safe, keeping our riskiest and most vulnerable in local placements wherever possible, maximising family resilience and improving children's independence skills and well-being. We will make strategic use of available funding and outcomes based commissioning will be used to focus our resources to families in need of support, especially those in the greatest need.

We will continue to reduce our use of expensive out of county placements for children and young people, and challenge charges for post-16 services. We will work with partners and providers of targeted and specialist services to maintain support to children with the highest needs and enable them to live as close to home as possible, by developing cost-effective local solutions such as the new residential autism academy.

Our arrangements for responding to the recent legislative changes are progressing well.

We will continue to ensure we deliver our statutory responsibilities, such as short breaks and accessible childcare for working parents with disabled children, whilst driving down costs and reducing duplication and management.

Administration

As a result of the proposals outlined above, and other savings already agreed and implemented, there will be a reduction in the support needs of specific services and the directorate as a whole. Administrative support for the directorate will be reviewed and reduced to reflect this, and to improve current practices to remove any unnecessary activity, reconfigure staff structures and increase the use of apprentices where appropriate.

Joint Commissioning

The Joint Commissioning team is a joint service supporting both Adult Social Services and Children, Education and Families in commissioning, contract management, educational and social care performance reporting and management, strategy and business planning, engagement, advocacy and complaints. As above, a reduction in the support needs of specific services and the directorate as a whole will mean there will also be a reduction in many of these services, although we will seek to protect statutory functions and those that safeguard vulnerable service users.

Managing our performance

A series of performance indicators will be used to assess our performance in delivering the priorities set out in this strategy. Performance Indicators are currently being developed and will be published on the Council's website

The successful delivery of the business strategy will be monitored on a quarterly basis by the Performance Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet. Progress will also be published on the Council's website.

Children, Education & Families - Budget Changes

Budget Book Line	Reference	Type of Budget Change	Detail	2015/16 £000	2016/17 £000	2017/18 £000	Total £000
			<u>Children, Education & Families (CEF) Cross Directorate</u>				
CEF1-1 CEF2-1 CEF3-1	15CEF10	S	Reduce administration support in line with reductions in directorate services, seek efficiency improvements.		-500		-500
CEF1, CEF2, CEF4	16CORP4	NS	Reduce the use of agency & contracted staff and introduce a vacancy factor for administration staff	-639			-639
CEF1-21 CEF2-5	15CEF11	S	Develop more integrated management across Special Educational Needs (SEN) & Disability. Challenge costs of 16+ SEN responsibilities transferred into OCC from Education Funding Agency, obtaining savings within Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funded SEN services that enable a larger DSG contribution to the educational cost of placements.		-1,200		-1,200
CEF3-3	15CEF12	S	Reduce support services from Joint Commissioning team in line with other service reductions. Reduce non-statutory public engagement activities.		-500		-500
CEF2	16CORP2	NS	Supplies & Services	-19			-19
CEF2-3 CEF1-3	15CEF 2 and 16CEF4	S & NS	Implementation of an integrated Children's Social Care and Early Intervention Service.	-1,000	-2,000	-3,000	-6,000
			Total Children, Education & Families (CEF) Cross Directorate	-1,658	-4,200	-3,000	-8,858

Children, Education & Families - Budget Changes

Budget Book Line	Reference	Type of Budget Change	Detail	2015/16 £000	2016/17 £000	2017/18 £000	Total £000
			<u>Education & Early Intervention</u>				
			Early Intervention				
CEF1-32	15CEF1	S	On-going effect of rephasing previous savings CEF10c and 14CEF4 relating to Children's Centres	-499			-499
			Subtotal Early Intervention	-499	0	0	-499
			Education				
CEF1-41	15CEF5	S	On-going effect of reducing Attendance service from Sept 2014	-100			-100
CEF1-41	15CEF6	S	Further reduce staffing of School Improvement services	-75			-75
			Subtotal Education	-175	0	0	-175
CEF1			Total Education & Early Intervention	-674	0	0	-674
			<u>Children's Social Care</u>				
			Management & Central Costs				
CEF2-1	15CEF7	S	Savings anticipated by further increasing close co-operation with partner agencies such as the police, the health service, schools and others	-250			-250
			Subtotal Management & Central Costs	-250	0	0	-250

Children, Education & Families - Budget Changes

Budget Book Line	Reference	Type of Budget Change	Detail	2015/16 £000	2016/17 £000	2017/18 £000	Total £000
			Corporate Parenting				
CEF2-2	15CEF8	P	Children's Homes borrowing costs to fund four new homes in Oxfordshire		420	238	658
CEF2-2	15CEF9	S	Children's Homes Savings - from building Children's Homes in the county which reduces the number of high cost out of county placements		-420	-238	-658
CEF2-2	16CEF2	NP	Fostering and Adoption - targeted recruitment and training of foster carers and provision of additional support to them. Further investment in adoption support services aiming to increase adoptive placements.	900			900
			Subtotal Corporate Parenting	900	0	0	900
			Social Care				
CEF2-34	16CEF1	NP	Agency Placements (Pressure of £7.4m partly met by £2.8m virement from corporate contingency). A significant increase in the number of children looked after, including 1-4 year olds, sibling groups and victims of child exploitation.	4,649			4,649
CEF2-32	16CEF3	NP	The Kingfisher team (working jointly with Thames Valley Police) has been recognised nationally for the work it has done in addressing Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) but does not have an on-going base budget allocation.	800			800
			Subtotal Social Care	5,449	0	0	5,449
CEF2			Total Children's Social Care	6,099	0	0	6,099
			Total Children, Education & Families	3,767	-4,200	-3,000	-3,433

Type of Budget Change

O - Previously agreed one-off investment

P - Previously agreed pressure

S - Previously agreed saving

NS - New saving agreed February 2015

NP - New pressure agreed February 2015