



**REPORT TO: EDUCATION, CHILDREN'S AND LEISURE SERVICES
COMMITTEE ON 20 FEBRUARY 2024**

**SUBJECT: CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SOCIAL WORK SERVICES
REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING TO 31 DECEMBER 2023**

BY: CHIEF OFFICER HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE MORAY

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the budget position for Children and Families Social Work Services as at 31 December 2023.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Council in terms of Section III (A) (2) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to the consideration of capital and revenue budgets and long term financial plans.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **It is recommended that Committee scrutinises and notes the budget position at 31 December 2023.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The report highlights those areas of the budget where there is a significant percentage variance identified at 31 December 2023.

4. BUDGET POSITION

- 4.1 The spend at 31 December 2023 is £13,824,000 against a budget to date of £13,940,000, giving an underspend of £116,000 as shown in **Appendix 1**.
- 4.2 The area teams budget has an overspend of £346,000 which is made up of £85,000 overspend on self directed support and home to school transport for foster children £26,000. There are external legal fees and compensation costs of £267,000. Self directed support is currently being reviewed. The overspend is reduced by other minor underspends in the teams.
- 4.3 The home to school transport budget is used to ensure that children who are placed in care outwith their catchment areas can still attend their own school. Often a child and their family are undergoing a return home assessment or this has been a recent change of address for them. When any further moves are ruled out, i.e. the child will return home, there are usually plans made for a

school move. The cost of transport is expensive and has risen with the current economic landscape. The budget is closely scrutinised to ensure that all costs aligned with the budget are appropriate and that there are exit plans, where appropriate, for all children using home to school transport.

- 4.4 A Review of spend for Self Directed Support was presented to the Education, Children's and Leisure Services Committee on 28 November 2023. The mitigations identified in that report are continuing to be actioned. There is a current review with Accountancy of the tracking of spend. This includes developing an improved monitoring approach which will support more effective tracking of both current and future spend. The review of the price point and eligibility criteria is ongoing to ensure that Self Directed Support is provided to the most appropriate children and young people and offers best value for money. Linked to this there is planning with the Commissioning Team to develop commissioned services to reduce the reliance upon Self Directed Support. There continues to be scrutiny and oversight of the Self Directed Support by the Resource Panel and strategic support from the Children's Services Plan 2023-26 and the associated Disability and Neurodiversity Group.
- 4.5 The underspend in commissioning is £235,000. The contract for children with disabilities residential care has an underspend of £128,000, this is due to the young people transitioning to adult services but continuing to occupy the residential unit and leaving no beds available. Alternative accommodation options for young people with disabilities are being looked into. Due to the delay in a new contract starting there is slippage of £20,000. There are currently two contracts which have come to an end and commissioning are looking at merging the funding to create a single contract which will meet the needs of neuro-divergent young people. This will help reduce the pressure on the self directed support budget.
- 4.6 Corporate parenting has an underspend of £226,000 which is mainly due to underspends on adoption allowances and legal fees £41,000, fostering fees and allowances £37,000 and throughcare/aftercare grants £33,000. There is also one-off income from adoption placements in Moray by other Local Authorities £71,000. The balance is made up of various minor underspends.

5. ESTIMATED OUTTURN

- 5.1 The estimated outturn for 2023/24 is £19,238,000 against a budget of £19,663,000 resulting in an estimated underspend for the year of £425,000.
- 5.2 There is an anticipated overspend on the area teams of £654,000. This is made up of self directed support £107,000, home to school transport for foster children £40,000 and legal fees and compensation costs of £484,000. There are other minor underspends which reduce the overspend.
- 5.3 The anticipated underspend on commissioning is made up of children with disabilities residential contract £264,000, slippage in Restorative Practice contract starting £21,000 and the review of two contracts which have ended £104,000.

- 5.4 The main underspends are adoption allowances and post adoption support £41,000, fostering fees and allowances £215,000, throughcare/aftercare grants £34,000 and one-off income for adoption placements in Moray of £71,000.
- 5.5 Throughcare/aftercare grants are provided to care leavers and can be claimed between the ages of 16 and 26. These grants can be claimed in full or partially. As a result of this, although the overall future financial implication can be calculated, the annual cost cannot be predicted. The cost within a year is dependent upon the individual circumstances of young people, when they wish to claim the grant and whether their claim is in full or partial. Care Leavers are supported by the Throughcare and Aftercare Team to claim these grants. These grants are monitored and tracked by the Service Manager for Placement Services.
- 5.6 Staff savings from vacancies and appointment below top of scale are anticipated to exceed the budget by £275,000.

6. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

The Children's Services Revenue Budget has particular reference to National Outcome 8 – we have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk.

(b) Policy and Legal

The Council has statutory responsibilities to meet educational needs, the needs of children and young people in need and those it looks after.

(c) Financial implications

The resource implications are set out in this report and at **Appendix 1**. The underspend as at 31 December 2023 is £116,000 against a budget to date of £13,940,000. The estimated year end position is expenditure of £19,238,000 against a budget of £19,663,000 resulting in an underspend of £425,000.

(d) Risk implications

Budget Managers are aware of their responsibilities for managing budget allocations and approval for any variances will be sought from Committee in line with the Financial Regulations.

(e) Staffing implications

There are no staffing implications associated with this report.

(f) Property

There are no property implications associated with this report.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

An Equality Impact Assessment is not required because the report is to inform the Committee on budget monitoring.

(h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts

No climate change and biodiversity impacts arise directly from this report.

(i) Consultations

Chief Financial Officer and Caroline O'Connor, Committee Services Officer have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of this report where it relates to their areas of responsibility.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 That Committee scrutinises and notes the budget position as at 31 December 2023.

Author of Report: Tracy Stephen, Head of Service (MIJB)

With authors Nicky Gosling, Accountant

Background Papers:

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