



**Bristol City Council
Review of Children's Social Care
December 2017**

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1. Introduction and Context

Peopletoo were commissioned by Bristol City Council to undertake a bespoke review of Children's Services across September and October 2017.

The outline scope of the review was to undertake a review of the current Children Services operating model which will include Early Help and Prevention services that sit outside of Children's Services, but are a key factor in the management of demand. As part of this it was agreed that the review would also consider the wider statutory and legislative 'children's partnership' landscape.

The objectives of this review were to:

- Identify and develop key findings and recommendations, through analysis of data and meetings with key personnel.
- Validate the existing medium term financial plan and linked to the analysis above identify any further opportunities for efficiency or reduction in growth
- Model and profile financial efficiencies identified and develop one overarching financial improvement plan for the Service.

The agreed outputs were:

- **Validation of existing medium term financial plans** – working with Managers and Finance use our knowledge and experience to test existing medium term financial plans in order to ascertain if they are achievable, profiled accurately and have been maximised.
- **Financial Improvement Plan (FIP)** – this identifies and profiles existing savings plans along with additional opportunities for efficiency savings as outlined in the recommendations – this is worked through with Finance and the Service to prevent 'double counting' of savings with existing medium term financial plans. Behind each savings line sits a robust modelling approach to identify projected savings
- **Key Milestones** - details the key actions/activities and associated timelines required to take place in order to achieve the financial efficiencies identified in the FIP. This will also account for key dependencies such as consultation, cabinet decision making etc.
- **Key Risks** – details the key risks associated with the delivery of the recommendations along with appropriate mitigating action.
- **Key Dependencies** – details the key dependencies which need to be addressed if sustainable implementation is to be achieved e.g. capacity, skills, partner engagement.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all at Bristol City Council who have supported this review.

2. Executive Summary

As outlined in section 3 of this report, despite the 16% increase in the number of children living in Bristol between 2005 to 2015, the demand for Childrens Social Care in Bristol whilst higher than the national and regional averages, is better than or in line with statistical neighbours, with only the rate of Looked After Children (LAC) and re referrals rates being slightly above. A key issue for the Local Authority (LA) is that there is a disproportionate number of older children coming into the system which in turn increases costs as older children are typically harder to adopt.

The LA have traditionally invested significantly in Prevention and Early Help and has also benefited from a well performing Troubled Families programme, but as financial pressures as a result of austerity continue, there is a risk that this may become a target area for further efficiencies.

Bringing together Children and Families and Targeted Services into one Directorate offers a real opportunity to review Early Help in Bristol, delivering a more targeted approach with partners to supporting those of on the edge of care, and sustaining the achievements of the Troubled Families programme once funding ceases.

The above also provides opportunity to take a more coordinated approach to commissioning, ensuring any duplication is removed and that services commissioned are targeted, evaluated and provide the service with value for money.

The proposed establishment of integrated locality teams which sees social workers, domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental health specialists under a unified management structure, is a model Peopletoo would endorse and would also support the proposed reduction in Looked After Children, through preventing step up and support step down from statutory services.

One of the key concerns for Childrens and Families is around its in-house residential resources, which currently due to the complexity of children placed are significantly under occupied, placing yet further pressure on an already stretched placement budget. We have therefore considered how this could be addressed through the replacement of more but smaller properties, a model which has been successfully adopted elsewhere. Coupled with the reduction in operating costs, adoption of this model will support high cost out of authority placements to come back into Bristol. Previously accommodation of these children and young people with very complex needs was difficult in the larger bed homes.

No recourse to public funds continues to be an increasing pressure in Childrens Services, and taking a successful model from a London Borough would see the secondment of a Border Agency resource to support the Service on a regular basis for a period of 12 months. This has seen the London Borough benefit from expertise in the support of checking new cases for anomalies, identifying fraud and supporting the appeal process. Whilst also establishing a clear exit route for all families with support from other areas of the Council such as Housing and partners.

We are aware that the service has a draft Medium Term Financial Saving Plan for 2018/19 through to 2021/22 amounting to a net figure of £8.9m of efficiencies over the 4 year period. Adoption of the recommendations in this report along with the efficiencies already identified by the service, will deliver savings in the region of £8.8m over a 5 year period. However, we must take into account a forecasted combined overspend for Targeted Support, Disabled Services and Children and Families in 2017/18 of £1.3m, creating a pressure of £1.4m over the 5 year period.

Appendix A provides a comprehensive and profiled investment plan which has been developed by the Service to support delivery of the financial efficiencies identified in section 16. Successful and sustainable delivery of £8.8m efficiency saving over a 5 year period will require investment in areas such as project and programme management, specialist knowledge and practice, multi-agency capacity and IT.

3. Recommendations and Next Steps

This section describes the recommendations that need to be delivered based on the findings of the review.

Activity and Workstream	Relevant Transformation Work Programme	Additional Resources / Actions Required
PLACEMENT MANAGEMENT: <u>Objectives</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the capacity in-house foster care placements thereby reducing the usage of IFA placements for less complex cases, realigning the current split of 70% In House placements to 30% IFAs to 80% / 20%. 	Specialist Strategic Commissioning	Additional expertise and challenge may be required to support the development and implementation / monitoring of the Placement Sufficiency Strategy and Foster Care Recruitment Strategy with a view to this driving forward improvement and financial savings.
ADOPTION <u>Objective</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the number of children 	Edge of Care and Exit from Care	Additional expertise and challenge may be required to support the development and implementation / monitoring of the Adoption Recruitment Strategy with a view to this driving forward improvement and financial savings.

who leave care as a result of adoption.		
SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP ORDERS <u>Objective</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of children who leave care as a result of a Special Guardianship Order. • Achieve value for money in Special Guardianship Orders through the phasing out of festival payments and the phasing in of means testing 	Stem the Flow - Edge of Care and Exit from Care	Additional expertise and challenge may be required to support the delivery of this target.
EARLY HELP, EDGE OF CARE, INTEGRATED APPROACH <u>Objective</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a Deep Dive Review of Early Help to ensure a co-ordinated, value for money approach including the development of an Edge of Care approach • Development of an Edge of Care Team • Whole system transformation enabling increased integration and partnership working across the 	Culture Change with Partners Co-produced Redesign of Early Help and Edge of Care Offer	Additional capacity to undertake an independent Deep Dive Review of Early Help Additional capacity to support whole system transformation

continuum of need		
RECONFIGURATION OF RESIDENTIAL CARE OFFER <u>Objective</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reconfigure and modernise the in house residential offer to achieve better outcomes for children who may otherwise be placed out of the City, and achieve better value for money 	Specialist Strategic Commissioning	Additional capacity to identify the range of options, best practice elsewhere, business case development and legal and property expertise.
OUT OF AUTHORITY PLACEMENTS <u>Objective</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bringing complex cases back into Bristol and ensuring value for money on remaining OOA placements 	Specialist Strategic Commissioning	Project Management and Social Worker support to identify individuals and work with them and their families to move into the new 2 bed homes.
HEALTH CONTRIBUTION <u>Objective</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In partnership with Health develop a transparent and fair method of calculation funding arrangements for complex health and social care needs. 	Specialist Strategic Commissioning	External expertise to support development of a high cost calculator and supporting governance and commissioning arrangements
COMMISSIONING	Specialist Strategic Commissioning	This work is currently being undertaken but some elements could benefit acceleration to support the review of Early Help

<u>Objective</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete the mapping of existing contracts with the view to maximising value for money 		
UASC/ NO RECOURSE TO PUBLIC FUNDS <u>Objective</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To work closely with the Border Agency to legitimately reduce spend in this area and ensure all families have a clear exit route. 	Stem the flow	Secondment of a Border Agency official is recommended 2 days a week for 12 months
TECHNOLOGY SUPPORTING INCREASED EFFICIENCY <u>Objective</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To embed agile working and support data sharing and recording across integrated teams 	Capacity to Deliver High Quality Social Work	IT and Project Management support