

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

DATE: 26 NOVEMBER 2013

Draft Revenue Budget and Capital Programme 2014/15 for Children's Services Portfolio

Ward(s) All

Portfolio: Councillor R Andrew – Children's Services

Summary of report

This report outlines the portfolio plans for future service delivery, along with the approach being taken to delivering service improvements and cost efficiency for the Children's Services portfolio. This includes Cabinet's draft revenue budget options and draft capital programme for 2014/15 for consultation, for the panel to consider and make recommendations to Cabinet if they so choose.

Recommendation

The panel are recommended to :-

- A) Consider the portfolio plan for future service delivery, and draft revenue options in this report, and make recommendations to Cabinet as appropriate.
- B) Review and make recommendations to Cabinet as appropriate, on the draft capital programme for services within the remit of this panel.

Background papers

Various financial working papers.

Reason for scrutiny

To enable consultation and scrutiny of the draft portfolio plan, draft revenue budget options, and draft capital programme for 2014/15.

Resource and legal considerations

Cabinet on 23 October 2013 presented their draft portfolio plans on future service delivery, including the draft revenue budget 2014/15 and draft capital programme for consultation.

Corporate position

1. 2014/15 Draft Revenue Budget Headlines – corporate position

The revenue budget has been constructed in accordance with the council's medium term financial strategy (MTFS) and all relevant corporate financial protocols and presents a balanced budget. This includes the future financial predictions on all council funding and pressures, including the forecast reduction in our direct government funding. This results in:

- A focus on a policy-led, risk assessed budget setting approach using corporate priorities established by Cabinet and the Sustainable Community Strategy,
- A total net council tax requirement of **£85.40m**
- Provision for inflationary pressures of **£2.29m**
- Provision for other known budget pressures, including demographic and cost pressures, and reduced levels of income or grant, of **£6.15m**.
- New savings options of **£18.97m**
- Full year impact of savings approved in the 2013/14 budget of **£2.20m**
- Opening general reserves in line with the council's MTFS

The estimated gross revenue expenditure budget for 2014/15 will be **£619.78m**, and gross income will be **£534.38m**, resulting in a net council tax requirement of **£85.40m**. These figures may change as grant allocations are finalised and decisions on council tax, etc, are taken.

It has been possible to commit to £6.15m to address key priorities and funding of essential cost pressures. This includes changes to discretionary housing payments and housing benefits and the correction of income targets. It also covers a provision to fund inflationary pressures (i.e. contractual), and corporate cost pressures to fund for example, the revenue implications of the capital programme, pay and grading and pension realignments. Income targets have also been corrected in some areas and to address the impact from reduced levels of grant.

This commitment has been made possible by planned improvements in efficiencies and other savings. The council is transforming the way it undertakes its business, with a view to reducing overhead and transactional costs.

2. 2014/15 Draft Capital Programme Headlines – corporate position

The draft capital programme for 2014/15 totals £37.61m. It sets out new capital investment funded from the council's own resources of £14.05m (funded by capital receipts and unsupported borrowing) and externally funded schemes of £23.56m (funded by capital grants) and represents a balanced programme for 2014/15. In addition, the report sets out a further two years of proposals for 2015/16 to 2016/17.

Despite reductions in capital funding in recent years and going forward, the draft capital programme contains some significant investment into highways, education, and into adult social care and housing to support vulnerable households through Health through Warmth and provision of aids and adaptations. A reserve list of new projects is also reported, where funding could be redirected in year if available.

Position for services within the remit of this panel

This report summarises the portfolio plans for service delivery, including draft revenue options and draft capital programme 2014/15, for services within the remit of this panel.

The plan and options are presented to this panel for consultation and scrutiny and allow the panel to make recommendations to Cabinet.

1. 2014/15 Draft Revenue Budget

The draft portfolio plans relating to the services within the remit of this panel are attached at **Appendix 1** (Children's Services portfolio).

Table 1 sets out the draft revenue budget 2014/15 for the Children's Services portfolio, including changes in resources compared to the approved budget for 2013/14.

Table 1 : Draft Net Budget – Children's Services Portfolio	2014/15 £m
Budget brought forward from 2013/14	66.220
Contractual inflation	0.101
New savings options	(4.469)
Full year effect of previous years approved savings	
- Redesign of services to include youth justice service, youth work, parent partnership and information and advice guidance arrangement	(0.090)
- Integrated working through children's centres	(0.300)
- Release of profit and overheads from the contract	(0.100)
- Restructuring the senior management	(0.150)
Draft net budget requirement	61.212

Further provision for pay award and pension change are currently held corporately and will be allocated as the budget is finalised, based on actual requirements.

2. 2014/15 Draft Capital Programme

Table 2 sets out the draft capital programme 2014/15 to 2016/17 for the Children's Services portfolio with further detail of the schemes below.

Table 2 : Draft Capital Programme – Children's Service Portfolio			
Project	2014/15 £	2015/16 £	2016/17 £
Externally funded schemes			
Education - Basic Need	1,160,396	0	0
Education – Devolved Formula Capital	531,483	504,909	479,664
Education – Capital Maintenance	3,530,556	3,530,556	3,530,556
Total draft capital programme	5,222,435	4,035,465	4,010,220

Education basic need

Funded from the Department of Education to be spent on maintenance of schools.

Education devolved formula capital

Funding from the Department of Education which is calculated on a school by school basis and is passported on to them to spend as they require.

Education capital maintenance

Funding from the Department of Education which is also spent on maintenance of schools.

Citizen impact

The budget is aligned with council and service delivery priorities. The report sets out the plans for future service delivery for the services within the remit of this panel.

Environmental impact

The impact on the environment is considered alongside all budget / capital programme options.

Performance management

Financial performance is considered alongside service targets. Managers are required to deliver their service targets within budget, and there are comprehensive performance arrangements in place to monitor and manage this.

Equality Implications

Service managers have regard to equalities in setting budgets / capital programmes and delivering services. Equality impact assessments will be undertaken as required prior to final recommendations being made to Council on the budget.

Changes to Children and Young People Services

The change programme set out below is informed by the need to maximise the impact of finite resources across Children and Young People's Services and the wider partnership. Practical proposals which seek to address budget pressures are highlighted in table 1 and include:

- Reviewing the balance of cost and effectiveness across directly delivered services and contracted arrangements with independent and third sector providers
- Developing more effective approaches to meeting the needs of children looked after, with a related positive impact on associated cost pressures
- Review and redesign of traded services to schools
- Reshaping the delivery model for children's residential provision
- Reshaping our Children's Centres to reflect the Early Help Offer
- Reducing transport costs for children and young people with special educational needs

A comprehensive programme of change and improvement is being implemented across Children's Services, designed to move towards a more efficient and effective service model from 2014/15. This approach is driven by the parallel requirement to improve the quality and effectiveness of practice and service provision and to address resource pressures at both a national and local level. The reshaping of Children and Young People's Services is critically informed by some significant challenges. These include:

- An intensive focus on sustaining hard-won improvements to the quality of safeguarding and child protection services
- Tackling a notable increase in the numbers of children and young people looked after by the local authority, with associated cost pressures
- Integrating education and school improvement functions into the organisation following transition from a substantial outsourced contract in 2013
- Ensuring smooth succession to a permanent and stable leadership team following a sustained period of interim leadership
- Building the social work workforce, reducing agency staff and embedding good quality frontline practice

Key elements of our reshaped service model include:

- Strengthened performance management and quality assurance, underpinned by robust and reliable data at both a strategic and operational level. This will inform analysis of impact and will drive decisions on how to make the most effective use of finite resources
- Integrated commissioning with a primary focus on improved outcomes, early help and preventative intervention to progressively reduce the demand for more resource-intensive support
- A productive partnership with schools that reflects the changing role of the local authority in driving school improvement, including sustainable and impactful school to school improvement and educational attainment
- Implementation of a bold workforce development strategy to improve the stability of operational staffing and the quality of frontline practice. There will be a specific focus on building a strong permanent workforce and reducing the reliance on agency staff – impacting on cost and efficiency
- A stable and permanent senior leadership team to drive forward sustained improvement and the implementation of increasingly challenging cost efficiencies

Action being taken to progressively move the organisation towards a more efficient and effective service model from 2014/15 includes the following:

- Appointment of a new senior leadership team is underway with a national recruitment campaign from mid-September. This is in addition to wider workforce development including staff recruitment to key operational posts
- Significant and continuing improvements in the quality and reliability of performance and qualitative data to inform strategic and operational decision-making and resource allocation
- Strengthening of governance and partnership arrangements with a reshaped Local Safeguarding Board, a Children and Young People's Partnership Board with clear priorities and robust Scrutiny and Corporate Parenting arrangements in place
- Rigorous implementation of the Strategic Improvement Plan for Safeguarding. Under the oversight of the Improvement Board a wide and highly effective programme of action is being undertaken to address the quality and effectiveness of frontline practice, the quality of leadership and governance, and the capacity, capability and culture of children and young people's services
- A programme management approach to tackling key resource pressures

Consultation

This is a specific meeting for scrutiny to consider the draft revenue budget and draft capital programme for 2014/15.

Consultation is an integral part of the budget process and arrangements are in hand to consult with a wide range of stakeholders (i.e. councillors, residents, service users, business sector, voluntary and community organisations, etc.).

Each year the council consults residents and stakeholders as part of its budget process. This year, over 200 members of staff from across all directorates who have interaction with key groups / stakeholders, have been briefed on the budget message and will be involved throughout the budget consultation process which takes the form of two phases.

Phase one (early September to October 23rd) has seen 'Budget- have your say' postcards distributed, as well as an online form and email which are being used to capture feedback from the public on council cost cutting measures. Staff communication is key, therefore as well as the staff briefings, budget information has been shared via the Intranet and core brief, on pay slips and posters in offices. Online forms and an email address are being used to capture feedback from staff.

Phase two (24th October to 14th November) focuses on the draft budget proposals, allowing for a more informed and meaningful conversation with the public and staff. Staff involved in phase one will be provided with all the information they need to help communicate the draft budget proposals and capture and encourage feedback in the same way they did in phase one. Staff are being briefed before going out and about in the borough, talking to members of the public face to face at venues including libraries, leisure centres, supermarkets, community associations and other local venues (a detailed timetable of dates, times and locations will be published widely). Business representatives will be made aware of the draft budget proposals via existing communication channels and will be consulted at two meetings in early November.

A detailed report on consultation feedback from both phases of consultation, to include scrutiny feedback, will be presented to Cabinet on 11th December.

Any changes to these options, following public consultation, will be reported to a future meeting of the panel, providing an opportunity to make further recommendations to Cabinet. Cabinet may wish to consider the feedback contained within this report in formulating their draft budget proposals

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PORTFOLIO: CHILDREN'S SERVICES

A. Summary of Services within the Portfolio

Preventative and Targeted Services	<p>Effectiveness, Improvement & Contract Management</p> <p>Integrated Young People's Support Service</p> <p>Prevention Workforce Development Partnerships</p> <p>Education Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intelligence Management • Strategy / Service Planning; • Partnership Performance Management • Information Advice and Guidance; • Targeted Youth Support; • Youth Justice Service; • Positive Activities; • Active Involvement; • Education Business Partnership; • Teenage Pregnancy; • Parent Partnership ; • Common Assessment Framework; • Area Family Support Teams; • Workforce Development; • Children's Centres; • Parenting; • Think Family; • Early Years; • New relationship with Schools • LEA Functions provided by the council • Placements services including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Adoption Team ○ Fostering Team x3 ○ Residential Care – 5 children's homes • Contact and assessment service • Disability Service • CAMHS (located in health - matrix managed) • Sufficiency and Placement Commissioning • Responsible Individual for LA • Independent Reviewing Officers • Safeguarding Board • Child Death Overview Panel • Multi Agency Screening Team • Initial Response Teams x 4 • Vulnerable Children SW teams x 6
Specialist Services	<p>Corporate Parenting - Placements and Resources</p> <p>Safeguarding</p> <p>Initial Response Service</p> <p>Safeguarding and Family Support Teams</p> <p>Looked After Children's Service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAC Teams x3 • Transition and Leaving Care Team

B. Portfolio Objectives / Outcomes / Purpose

Our Vision and Ambition

We believe that all children and young people in Walsall have the right to be healthy, happy and safe, to be loved, valued and respected and to have high aspirations for a successful future. Our ambition is to be *'Better Together For Children'* by working in partnership to offer the very best standard of help, support, care and protection for children and young people throughout their journey through our services.

Our Key Priorities agreed with the Children & Young People's Partnership

1. Supporting the most vulnerable families to provide the best start in life for children.
2. Ensuring that children maintain a healthy weight.
3. Reducing the harm caused by child sexual exploitation including children missing from school, care and home.
4. Greater diversity of choice for learning, training and employment for young people.
5. Supporting the transition into adulthood for children and young people with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities by creating single 'through life' plans.
6. Promoting pride in the achievements of the children and young people in Walsall, and securing a strong and active voice and influence for young people to shape local services.
7. Better communication between frontline staff in all agencies that support children and families
8. Reducing the impact of child poverty

Our Change & Development Priorities

- To secure sustained improvements in Safeguarding and Child Protection Services following the DfE Improvement Notice served in Nov 2012.
- To embed a comprehensive Early Help Offer, integrated with wider Children's Services and partnership provision.
- To further develop Walsall's arrangements for supporting Children Looked After by the Local Authority to achieve their maximum potential.
- To drive forward education and learning in Walsall with strong and effective School Improvement functions.
- To build a strong, stable, responsive and effective children's workforce in Walsall.

C. Service Design (informed by customer demand)

A comprehensive programme of change and improvement is being implemented across Children and Young People's Services. This is driven by the parallel requirement to improve the quality and effectiveness of practice and service provision and to address resource pressures at both a national and local level.

Current Challenges

The reshaping of Children and Young People's Services is critically informed by some significant challenges. These include:

- An intensive focus on sustaining hard-won improvements to the quality of safeguarding and child protection services
- Tackling a notable increase in the numbers of children and young people looked after by the local authority, with associated cost pressures
- Integrating education and school improvement functions into the organisation following transition from a substantial outsourced contract in 2013.
- Ensuring smooth succession to a permanent and stable leadership team following a sustained period of interim leadership.
- Building the social work workforce, reducing agency staff and embedding good quality frontline practice.

Our Service Model from 2014/15

Key elements of our reshaped service model include:

- Strengthened performance management and quality assurance, underpinned by robust and reliable data at both a strategic and operational level. This will inform analysis of impact and will drive decisions on how to make the most effective use of finite resources.
- Integrated commissioning with a primary focus on improved outcomes, early help and preventative intervention to progressively reduce the demand for more resource-intensive support.
- A productive partnership with schools that reflects the changing role of the local authority in driving school improvement, including sustainable and impactful school to school improvement and educational attainment.
- Implementation of a bold workforce development strategy to improve the stability of operational staffing and the quality of frontline practice. There will be a specific focus on building a strong permanent workforce and reducing the reliance on agency staff – impacting on cost and efficiency.
- A stable and permanent senior leadership team to drive forward sustained improvement and the implementation of increasingly challenging cost efficiencies.

Implementing the Change Programme

Action being taken to progressively move the organisation towards a more efficient and effective service model from 2014/15 includes the following:

- Appointment of a new senior leadership team is underway with a national recruitment campaign from mid-September. This is in addition to wider workforce development including staff recruitment to key operational posts.
- Significant and continuing improvements in the quality and reliability of performance and qualitative data to inform strategic and operational decision-making and resource allocation.
- Strengthening of governance and partnership arrangements with a reshaped Local Safeguarding Board, a Children and Young People's Partnership Board with clear priorities and robust Scrutiny and Corporate Parenting arrangements in place.
- Rigorous implementation of the Strategic Improvement Plan for Safeguarding. Under the oversight of the Improvement Board a wide and highly effective programme of action is being undertaken to address the quality and effectiveness of frontline practice, the quality of leadership and governance, and the capacity, capability and culture of children and young people's services.
- A programme management approach to tackling key resource pressures. In addition to a range of measures shared with CMT this will include reducing the

costs associated with increasing numbers of looked after children, whilst ensuring that the needs of all vulnerable children and young people are met. (A summary of the project plan for taking action on increasing LAC numbers is attached for information).

Our Current Position

Intensive performance monitoring of safeguarding improvements through the established Improvement Board arrangements provide a strong focus on this area of the service and indicates that key priorities which are integral to the change programme are being delivered on target.

The 'adequate' judgment of the recent Ofsted inspection of Local Authority Arrangements for the Protection of Children provides a further clear indicator of positive progress in improving safeguarding and child protection services for the longer-term and reflects a strong self-awareness within Children and Young People's services.

Integration of education and school, improvement functions is being undertaken on an interim basis with key business requirements covered pending the appointment of additional capacity at Assistant Director level to drive forward substantive changes.

A schedule of proposed options for tackling cost pressures across the full range of Children and Young People's Services has been shared with Corporate Management Team (CMT) and is under review.

D. Financial analysis - reshaping the revenue budget (5 year financial plan)

The provisional revenue budget for 2014/15 is attached. This summarises the current cash limit for 2013/14 and the proposed cash limit for 2014/15. It details the proposed changes in activity required for 2014/15.

In summary the proposed net budget for 2014/15 is £61.212m compared to £66.220m in 2013/14, a change of £5.008m.

E. Future capital requirements

The draft capital programme for 2014/15 for the Children's Services portfolio is £5.22m – all external funded.

F. Revenue savings options requiring a change in policy to implement

There are a number of revenue savings options that require an executive decision to implement. For Children's Services, these relate to –

- F1 Review and redesign of children's education services
- F2 Reduction in transport costs for children (including SEN)
- F3 Reduce the contribution to Children's Safeguarding Board
- F4 Review of targeted youth support and targeted careers information, advice and guidance services
- F5 Reductions in contracts with voluntary organisations and community associations
- F6 Reduce taxi costs within Children's Services
- F7 Reductions in children's centres funding
- F8 Expiry of contract for family support services

F1: Review and redesign of children's education services

Estimate Net Saving			
2014 / 2015	2015 / 2016	2016 / 2017	Implementation cost
£500,000	£0	£0	£0

1. Description of the Savings Proposal

- 1.1 All education services that moved into Children's Services directorate are currently being reviewed to ensure they meet the needs of children and young people, align with statutory functions and also are value for money. These reviews will lead to each service being reshaped based on recommendations and budget constraints.

2. Implications Associated With Savings Proposal

2.1 **Customers**

Service provision will continue, albeit in a different manner but this will be based on statutory functions, government policy changes and the needs of the future service provision to support priority needs for children and young people in Walsall. All non-statutory services will be reviewed and if there remains a business case and need for services, these will be continued, there is a potential for traded services. If the review recommends cessation of any service/function, Children's Services will work with schools to ensure there is no gap in provision by helping to sign post to alternative providers or consider other ways of working.

2.2 **Employees**

The reshaping of services will review systems and process to reduce waste but there will be the need to reduce overall headcount. Any reduction in staff numbers will be carried out in accordance with council processes. It is expected to reduce headcount within education services by 12 full time equivalent posts.

2.3 **Partners**

Any changes will be in consultation with applicable partner agencies (i.e. Schools and other educational bodies).

2.4 **Corporate Plan**

Education contributes to a thriving economy and better chances of employment.

2.5 **Other Council Services**

Not applicable.

3. Associated Risks

- 3.1 Any non-statutory services that become traded may not generate sufficient income to be sustainable.

4. Consultation and customer feedback

- 4.1 All redesigns and reshaping of services will be done in conjunction with stakeholders.

5. **Legal Implications**

5.1 All statutory functions will continue to be met, however how they are provided by change.

6. **Equal Opportunities and Environmental Implications**

6.1 All reshaping/redesign activity will be carried out in accordance equal opportunity regulations.

6.2 Education Services are currently being relocated into fewer buildings which will reduce the impact on the environment.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

7.1 An equality impact assessment is currently being undertaken for this savings proposal, which will be assessed by the equalities team.

F2: Reduction in transport costs for children (including SEN)

Estimate Net Saving			
2014 / 2015	2015 / 2016	2016 / 2017	Implementation cost
£200,000	£0	£0	£0

1. Description of the Savings Proposal

- 1.1 Strict application of transport policy on school bus passes will reduce the number issued and a Special Educational Needs (SEN) transport procurement exercise completed by Summer 2014 to provide better value for money. Fewer bus passes will be issued and procurement will result in new contracts and some changeover issues to be managed.

2. Implications Associated With Savings Proposal

2.1 **Customers**

Fewer bus passes will be issued following a strict application of the existing policy. Following transfer of the function from Serco in April 2013, it was found that bus passes have been issued that would not have been had the policy been followed. Some parents who have been used to getting a bus pass will no longer be able to do so. SEN transport re-procurement will be undertaken in Summer 2014, changes in providers will be likely and the impact on budget and quality will be determined by the tenders and budget available.

2.2 **Employees**

None.

2.3 **Partners**

None.

2.4 **Corporate Plan**

Bus passes help pupils to attend schools of choice and SEN transport assists children with special needs attend education. Some parents are concerned that quality will reduce if budgets are reduced. Number of bus passes issued will reduce SEN transport provides income to many local taxi and transport companies. Children with special needs are at risk of social inclusion and transport to school assists inclusion.

2.5 **Other Council Services**

Special schools rely on high quality reliable transport to ensure children arrive at school ready to learn.

3. Associated Risks

- 3.1 Strict Application of bus pass policy is likely to result in appeals and take up management capacity.

4. Consultation and customer feedback

- 4.1 No consultation as no change in policy.

5. **Legal Implications**

5.1 None.

6. **Equal Opportunities and Environmental Implications**

6.1 Children with special needs are at risk of social inclusion and transport to school assists inclusion.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

7.1 An equality impact assessment is currently being undertaken for this savings proposal, which will be assessed by the equalities team.

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F3: Reduce the contribution to Children's Safeguarding Board

Estimate Net Saving			
2014 / 2015	2015 / 2016	2016 / 2017	Implementation cost
£30,000	£0	£0	£0

1. Description of the Savings Proposal

1.1 Reduce contribution to the Safeguarding Board.

2. Implications Associated With Savings Proposal

2.1 Customers

Minimal impact. The Council as a partner to the Board already contribute £110k which is currently a significantly higher contribution than other partners.

2.2 Employees

No impact.

2.3 Partners

The council and its partners will seek new ways of securing resources, some in kind, to maintain the Boards operational activities.

2.4 Corporate Plan

Safeguarding is a key priority for the Council and this will not have an adverse impact as it will be mitigated by partners.

2.5 Other Council Services

No impact.

3. Associated Risks

3.1 None.

4. Consultation and customer feedback

4.1 This funding was previously provided by outsourced contract in addition to significant contribution from children's services. Following transfer into the council all funding is in council budget. There will be minimal impact.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 None.

6. Equal Opportunities and Environmental Implications

6.1 None.

7. Equality Impact Assessment

7.1 An equality impact assessment is currently being undertaken for this savings proposal, which will be assessed by the equalities team.

F4: Review of targeted youth support and targeted careers information, advice and guidance services

Estimate Net Saving			
2014 / 2015	2015 / 2016	2016 / 2017	Implementation cost
£450,000	£0	£0	£0

1. Description of the Savings Proposal

1.1 Review of targeted youth support and targeted careers information, advice and guidance services (including contracted arrangements – Prospects).

2. Implications Associated With Savings Proposal

2.1 Customers

Some reduction in level of support to young people and those at risk of becoming disengaged or already disengaged from Employment, Education or Training.

2.2 Employees

Potential risk to 5 council staff and 4 full-time equivalent staff from Prospects.

2.3 Partners

A direct impact on our contracting and partnership arrangements with Prospects and some reduction in our provision in and around young people in schools.

2.4 Corporate Plan

Improving safeguarding, learning and life chances for children and young people – a reduction of the level of targeted youth support to some vulnerable/’at risk’ young people.

Supporting businesses to thrive and supporting local people into work – reducing the value of the Prospects contract will reduce the number of personal advisers that provide careers advice to targeted young people. Reduction of around 6 local jobs via contract.

Creating safe, sustainable and inclusive communities – reduced targeted youth support including those young people engaged in or at risk of youth related crime and anti-social behaviour.

2.5 Other Council Services

No direct impact.

3. Associated Risks

3.1 A negative impact on the numbers of young people at risk of disengaging or disengaged from Employment, Education or Training.

4. Consultation and customer feedback

4.1 No consultation has taken place to date with customers, staff or partners.

5. **Legal Implications**

- 5.1 Appropriate contract management arrangements will need to be applied.
- 5.2 Statutory provision for targeted careers information advice and guidance (contained within 2008 Education of Skills Act and statutory guidance in 2013) will be met within continuing contract arrangements.

6. **Equal Opportunities and Environmental Implications**

- 6.1 Some loss of service to some vulnerable and at risk young people.
- 6.2 There is no negative environmental impact.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 7.1 An equality impact assessment is currently being undertaken for this savings proposal, which will be assessed by the equalities team.

F5: Reductions in contracts with voluntary organisations and community associations

Estimate Net Saving			
2014 / 2015	2015 / 2016	2016 / 2017	Implementation cost
£75,000	£0	£0	£0

1. **Description of the Savings Proposal**

1.1 Reductions in contracts with voluntary organisations and Community Associations.

2. **Implications Associated With Savings Proposal**

2.1 **Customers**

Some reduction in targeted youth support and targeted youth work. Specifics to be determined following contract review and discussion with providers.

2.2 **Employees**

No direct impact.

2.3 **Partners**

Negative impact on those voluntary and community organisations identified to have their contract value reduced.

2.4 **Corporate Plan**

Improving safeguarding, learning and life chances for children and young people – reduction in level of targeted youth support and targeted youth work with vulnerable young people.

Supporting businesses to thrive and supporting local people into work – reduction in level of participation in positive activities that support youth employability.

Creating safe, sustainable and inclusive communities – reduction in level of targeted youth support and targeted youth work to some young people at risk of youth crime and youth related anti-social behaviour.

2.5 **Other Council Services**

No direct impact identified at this stage but will need to work closely with area partnership and neighbourhood colleagues once specific contract reductions identified.

3. **Associated Risks**

3.1 A negative impact on youth related crime and anti-social behaviour.

3.2 Negative impact on relationship with identified providers.

3.3 Political lobbying from providers.

4. **Consultation and customer feedback**

4.1 No consultation has yet taken place to date with customers, staff or partners.

5. **Legal Implications**

5.1 Appropriate contract management arrangements will need to be applied.

6. **Equal Opportunities and Environmental Implications**

6.1 Some loss of service to targeted young people.

6.2 There is no environmental impact.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

7.1 An equality impact assessment is currently being undertaken for this savings proposal, which will be assessed by the equalities team.

F6: Reduce taxi costs within Children's Services

Estimate Net Saving			
2014 / 2015	2015 / 2016	2016 / 2017	Implementation cost
£100,000	£0	£0	£0

1. Description of the Savings Proposal

- 1.1 Working to reduce taxi costs both by reducing unit prices and reducing number of journeys purchased and not providing transport services to some customers. There will be an expectation that foster carers provide transport for their foster children wherever and whenever possible. In terms of logistics this may have some impact on their ability to take children on placement - particularly multiple placements.

2. Implications Associated With Savings Proposal

2.1 Customers

Some will no longer get taxis provided for them. This may impact on children being transported to school, to recreational activities and transport for them and their birth parents to contact sessions.

2.2 Employees

None.

2.3 Partners

Foster carers will need to provide more transport which may reduce availability of local foster carers and the number of placements they provide.

2.4 Corporate Plan

Improving safeguarding, learning and life chances for children and young people – Low risk that Children may not transported to contact with birth parents for which the LA has a duty and to school and recreational activities. However it is reasonable for foster carers to do so, and not always best practice for children to be transported by taxi.

Supporting businesses to thrive and supporting local people into work – Less business placed with local taxis

2.5 Other Council Services

None.

3. Associated Risks

- 3.1 Risk that Children may not transported to contact with birth parents for which the LA has a duty and to school and recreational activities. However in mitigation it is not always considered best practice for children to be transported by taxi.

4. Consultation and customer feedback

- 4.1 Operational staff consulted with to establish the feasibility and impact on foster carers.

5. **Legal Implications**

5.1 None.

6. **Equal Opportunities and Environmental Implications**

6.1 None.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

7.1 An equality impact assessment is currently being undertaken for this savings proposal, which will be assessed by the equalities team.

F7: Reduction in children's centres funding

Estimate Net Saving			
2014 / 2015	2015 / 2016	2016 / 2017	Implementation cost
£930,000	£0	£0	£0

1. Description of the Savings Proposal

- 1.1 Reduced funding would lead to a need to make further efficiencies from the planned shift to a hub and spoke model. This would be achieved by removal of some management and other support roles that are not integral to the delivery of the core purpose of children's centres. Work will also be undertaken to review and reduce contract costs that support local service delivery.

2. Implications Associated With Savings Proposal

2.1 Customers

Customers may see a change in how their local services are delivered however commitment remains to provide a core range of services at the existing sites. Some services may be provided at Hub level but will continue to outreach into local communities to ensure access. Non essential services such as baby massage will be reviewed and customers may in the future either be charged for this type of provision or signposted to other providers. Vulnerable families will continue to be targeted by settings and customers should see improved coordinated delivery as a result of this proposal.

2.2 Employees

A review of staff roles required to deliver core and targeted services in newly designed delivery model will take place in conjunction with centre leads. New structures will be established and a number of staff will be placed at risk and offered opportunities to take up new roles in new arrangements. To achieve savings it is anticipated that up to 37 staff could be made redundant.

2.3 Partners

A review of Service Level Agreements between local centres and partners/contractors will take place to identify any potential efficiency savings. This may impact on change in service requirements and value of contracts. The development of Early Help hubs will result in improved partnership working and ensure a more coordinated approach to service delivery.

2.4 Corporate Plan

The proposal supports corporate priorities to target services to those most in need and to ensure a better start for children.

2.5 Other Council Services

The proposed redesign of centre to a hub and spoke model provides opportunities for more effective liaison with other council services to deliver more efficiently.

3. **Associated Risks**

- 3.1 There is a risk of adverse press coverage resulting in concerns being raised by customers and partners who could perceive that they will lose local services. See consultation below.

4. **Consultation and customer feedback**

- 4.1 Extensive consultation has taken place with customers, communities and stakeholders during June and July 2013. The consultation sought views on proposals to group centres, to target childcare and to prioritise services for our most vulnerable families. Feedback broadly supported this approach. Additional savings can be achieved utilising feedback from this consultation.

5. **Legal Implications**

- 5.1 The local Authority has a legal duty to provide sufficient children centres to meet need. As this proposal retains the 18 local sites with better management and targeting support from Hubs, the statutory duty continues to be fulfilled.

6. **Equal Opportunities and Environmental Implications**

- 6.1 Equal Opportunity and Environmental implications will be considered in the development of new delivery model for children's centres.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 7.1 An equality impact assessment is currently being undertaken for this savings proposal, which will be assessed by the equalities team.

F8: Expiry of contract for family support services

Estimate Net Saving			
2014 / 2015	2015 / 2016	2016 / 2017	Implementation cost
£282,000	£0	£0	£0

1. Description of the Savings Proposal

1.1 Allow contract to expire on 31/10/13. Support for children 10-15 will be removed.

2. Implications Associated With Savings Proposal

2.1 Customers

Young people aged 10-15 will no longer access family support as provided by the contractor. A review of impact has not shown a reduction of 'step up' services and little impact on step down.

2.2 Employees

None in council, 8 by Contractor. The contractor is asserting TUPE rights so the saving may be reduced if successful.

2.3 Partners

Contract expiry will reduce services provided by Spurgeons.

2.4 Corporate Plan

This provides family support for vulnerable children which will no longer be provided.

2.5 Other Council Services

No impact.

3. Associated Risks

3.1 Although analysis of impact shows the service has limited impact – e.g. LAC numbers have grown over last year by around 80, there is a risk that numbers would have grown by even more and so after the service ceases, LAC numbers may increase.

4. Consultation and customer feedback

4.1 No consultation has taken place as the contract is due to expire.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 Contractor is asserting TUPE rights for staff, Council has rejected this view by confirming the service will cease.

6. Equal Opportunities and Environmental Implications

6.1 Young people aged 10-15 who need family support are likely to be at risk of social exclusion.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 7.1 An equality impact assessment is currently being undertaken for this savings proposal, which will be assessed by the equalities team.

Children's Services Portfolio Cash Limit

								HOW DOES THE OVERALL BUDGET MEET STRATEGIC PRIORITIES ?			
Service	Activity covered by this Area (per portfolio plan)	Gross Expenditure 2013/14	Gross Income 2013/14	Net Budget 2013/14	Budget 2014/15	Change £	Change Proposals	IMPROVING HEALTH INCLUDING WELLBEING AND INDEPENDENCE FOR OLDER PEOPLE	IMPROVING SAFEGUARDING, LEARNING AND LIFE CHANCES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE	SUPPORTING BUSINESSES TO THRIVE AND SUPPORTING LOCAL PEOPLE INTO WORK	CREATING SAFE, SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES
Education											
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Education responsibilities of the council: to promote high standards, to play a key role as champions for pupils and parents; to challenge schools causing concern, to ensure achievement gaps are narrowed for vulnerable children e.g. those children in care and those with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), ensuring fair access to all schools for every child; championing and promoting a strong supply of good, local, high achieving schools; ensuring fair access to opportunity for education and training Dedicated Schools Grant to maintained schools 	179,790,875	-163,954,972	15,835,903	14,935,903	-900,000	Non policy previous year savings: -£100k following efficiencies in education Policy savings: -£500k review & redesign of services -£200k reduction in transport costs for special education needs (SEN) children -£10k reduction in contribution to the Walsall Safeguarding Children's Board Non policy saving: -£90k for review and redesign of trading to schools	N/A	Review & Redesign of service - Funds range of services providing both statutory functions and additional support to schools. The budget reduction will not impact on statutory functions and could be mitigated by schools increasingly buying in support through traded services, for example those relating to continuing professional development, from either the Council or other providers SEN transport - Bus passes help pupils to attend schools of choice and SEN transport assists children with special needs attend education.	Review & Redesign of service- Education contributes to a thriving economy and better chances of employment. Traded Services - If schools do not purchase from council traded services, staffing may need to reduce SEN transport -SEN transport provides income to many local taxi and transport companies	SEN transport -Children with special needs are at risk of social inclusion and transport to school assists inclusion Safeguarding Contribution- The Safeguarding Children Board is a partnership Board which holds partners accountable for safeguarding children and contributes to safe communities.
Children's Services Management											
Children's Services Management	Management team for Children's	2,267,578	-38,000	2,229,578	1,789,578	-440,000	Non policy previous year savings: -£150k following efficiencies in Education Non policy savings: Reduction in management numbers -£200k Reduction in admin support -£90k	N/A	Children's leadership team are ensuring that children are safe, happy, healthy and have a bright future.	N/A	Ensuring vulnerable children are safe and cared for and supported to learn and achieve will help make Walsall a better place to live. Helps them to become socially included.
Disability Services											
Disability Services	Children with Disability Services	2,389,502	-450,000	1,939,502	1,939,502	0		N/A	Supports families and disabled children to ensure their wellbeing and safety and protection which is fundamental to the service.	Ensuring children with disabilities and their carers are well supported will help families living and working in walsall	Ensuring children with disabilities and their carers are well supported will help families living and working in walsall
Corporate Parenting											
Corporate Parenting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing Adoption, Fostering and Residential Care for looked after children (LAC) Contact between children and their parents and assessment of parents Commissioning external foster care and residential care Corporate Parenting Board 	287,578		287,578	287,578	0		N/A	Provides management of adoption, foster care and residential care for looked after children. High quality care helps prepare looked after children for work and for local foster carers and social workers potential opportunities.	A stable workforce prevents delays and gives consistency in the management of the childrens care.	Ensuring vulnerable children are safe and cared for and supported to learn and achieve will help make Walsall a better place to live. Helps them to become socially included.
Family Placements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for LAC in Transition and Leaving Care 	3,930,430	-373,334	3,557,096	3,557,096	0		N/A	Provides management of adoption, foster care and residential care for looked after children. High quality care helps prepare looked after children for work and for local foster carers and social workers potential opportunities.	A stable workforce prevents delays and gives consistency in the management of the childrens care.	Ensuring vulnerable children are safe and cared for and supported to learn and achieve will help make Walsall a better place to live. Helps them to become socially included.

								HOW DOES THE OVERALL BUDGET MEET STRATEGIC PRIORITIES ?			
Service	Activity covered by this Area (per portfolio plan)	Gross Expenditure 2013/14	Gross Income 2013/14	Net Budget 2013/14	Budget 2014/15	Change £	Change Proposals	IMPROVING HEALTH INCLUDING WELLBEING AND INDEPENDENCE FOR OLDER PEOPLE	IMPROVING SAFEGUARDING, LEARNING AND LIFE CHANCES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE	SUPPORTING BUSINESSES TO THRIVE AND SUPPORTING LOCAL PEOPLE INTO WORK	CREATING SAFE, SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES
Looked after Children		15,930,605	-919,904	15,010,701	14,461,828	-548,873	Investment: +£101k contractual inflation for foster carers fee & allowance payments. Policy saving: -£100k on reducing taxi costs Non policy saving: Focused on reducing the cost of looked after children -£550k	N/A	This funds placements of children and young people looked after by the council. High quality looked after children service prepares children for life.	The cost reduction plan will require increased use of local foster carers resulting in an increase in borough recruitment.	Ensuring vulnerable children are safe and cared for and supported to learn and achieve will help make Walsall a better place to live. Helps them to become socially included.
Transition and Learning Care		1,018,108		1,018,108	1,018,108	0		N/A	Helps looked after children leave care at 18 and find accommodation, work and live safely and independently.	Helps looked after children leave care and find work.	Ensuring vulnerable children are safe and cared for and supported to learn and achieve will help make Walsall a better place to live. Helps them to become socially included.
Internal Residential		4,049,909		4,049,909	3,512,909	-537,000	Non policy savings: Removal of staff budgets -£134k Review of night provision in homes -£103k Taking on more complex cases across the internet residential provision -£300k	N/A	Provides local residential care for looked after children.	High quality care can help prepare looked after children for work. Children's homes also provide local job opportunities.	Ensuring vulnerable children are safe and cared for and supported to learn and achieve will help make Walsall a better place to live. Helps them to become socially included.
Prevention, Workforce & Partnerships											
Prevention, Workforce & Partnerships and Common Assessment Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early support for families Common Assessment Framework; (CAF) Team of practitioners supporting all universal agencies and based in the Area Family Support Teams. • Area Family Support Teams; multi agency locality based teams working intensively as part of a (whole family approach) to meet the national guidance for vulnerable and troubled families • Workforce Development; central team that supports the wider partnership workforce and training requirements including parenting and inclusive of social worker recruitment and retention • Children's Centres and Early Years ; statutory provision delivering a core purpose and function of family support, child development, school readiness, child care and family learning. • Parenting Support; evidenced based 0-19 programmes delivered by trained practitioners to parents from vulnerable families • Think Family Team 'edge of care prevention'; central team of skilled practitioners working intensively with vulnerable children on the edge of going into care 	7,819,939	-733,089	7,086,850	5,436,850	-1,650,000	Non policy previous year savings: Improving integrated working in children's centres -£300k Policy savings: Reduction in children's centre funding -£930k. Non policy saving: Removal of teacher posts in children's centres -£320k Review of early years projects -£100k	N/A	Childrens centres provide early help and prevention to children and their families.	Provides childcare and family support to help families obtain employment and childrens centres also provide local employment.	Children's Centres help community cohesion by providing good social mix and by providing targeted support to those in greatest need.

								HOW DOES THE OVERALL BUDGET MEET STRATEGIC PRIORITIES ?			
Service	Activity covered by this Area (per portfolio plan)	Gross Expenditure 2013/14	Gross Income 2013/14	Net Budget 2013/14	Budget 2014/15	Change £	Change Proposals	IMPROVING HEALTH INCLUDING WELLBEING AND INDEPENDENCE FOR OLDER PEOPLE	IMPROVING SAFEGUARDING, LEARNING AND LIFE CHANCES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE	SUPPORTING BUSINESSES TO THRIVE AND SUPPORTING LOCAL PEOPLE INTO WORK	CREATING SAFE, SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES
Vulnerable Children											
Social Workers working with Vulnerable Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vulnerable Children Social Work teams x6 Social Work Initial Response Teams x3 	6,396,204	-52,764	6,343,440	6,046,440	-297,000	Policy saving: Spurgeons contract for the Family Support Service to expire -£282k Non policy saving: Utilising grants to fund research in practice costs - £15k	N/A	The service provides family support for vulnerable children and their families. Early help services make an effective contribution to supporting vulnerable children and families to help prevent children being taken into care.	High quality care and support can help prepare children into work. Social work posts also provide local job opportunities.	Ensures children are safe and cared for and supported to learn and achieve.
Safeguarding Children											
Safeguarding Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safeguarding Board 	2,665,156	-109,191	2,555,965	2,535,965	-20,000	Policy saving: Reducing Walsall Safeguarding Children's Board contribution (WSCB) -£20k	N/A	The WSCB is a Partnership Board and supported through resources from across the partnership. It is responsible for holding the partners to account in discharging their safeguarding responsibilities and will need to focus its resources to achieve this.	N/A	N/A
Young Peoples Support Services											
Integrated Young Peoples Support Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information Advice and Guidance; Targeted support to young people (YP) at risk of/or not in education employment or training Targeted Youth Support; Intensive 1-1 support to YP at risk or in need at level 2/3 Youth Justice Service; management of court ordered arrangements for young offenders to manage risk and reduce harm to YP and the community Positive Activities; Detached, mobile and centre based Youth work to engage targeted communities of YP to reduce youth crime and Anti social behaviour Active Involvement; support to voice of YP (customers) including LAC, UKYP, Walsall youth council etc Education Business Partnership; Delivering in schools, and supporting the schools/business partnership to increase skills and employability of YP Teenage Pregnancy; Range of support to teenage mums and activities to reduce teenage pregnancy Parent Partnership; Supports parents to ensure additional educational support to YP with SEN 	6,864,609	-559,035	6,305,574	5,690,575	-614,999	Non policy previous year savings: Service redesign -£90k Policy savings: Efficiencies within service -£450k Reduction in contracts with voluntary organisations and community associations -£75k	N/A	This service provides targeted support to vulnerable young people	This provides targeted support to help young people in to work.	This service provides targeted youth support and targeted youth work to some young people within local communities to prevent youth crime and youth related anti-social behaviour
Total Children's Services		233,410,493	-167,190,289	66,220,204	61,212,332	-5,007,872					

Working in a Challenging Financial Climate and Budget

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr R Andrew - Children's Services

Executive Summary:

This report is an update for Scrutiny on Children's Services improvement priorities and activity on workforce. It provides a summary of the Specialist Services Workforce Statement and Action Plan - October 2013, which addresses key Ofsted recommendations to manage capacity, capability and culture.

It explains our recruitment and retention issues (including the usage of agency social workers) and sets out our commitments to sustaining quality social work practice in Walsall.

Recommendations:

To scrutinise the strategic activity to date and direction of travel outlined in the proposals of the Specialist Services Workforce Statement and Action Plan.

Background papers:

Walsall Children's Services Strategic Improvement Plan for Safeguarding Children and Young People - Phase 2 2013 – 2014

Capacity, capability and culture; Progress report October 2012 (FV)

Walsall Children's Services - Specialist Services Workforce Statement and Action Plan - October 2013

Resource and legal considerations:

In order to avoid some compulsory redundancies in Social Care and Inclusion there will be potential trials and transfers of adult social workers in Children's Services.

The cost of 27 agency staff currently additional to establishment offset against the potential creation of 12 permanent posts would offer Walsall a significant reduction in staffing costs as we pay a premium of between £237.70 and £497.65 for agency staff.

Establishing average caseload ceiling targets will allow for better workload management and more effective workforce planning.

The potential reshape of children's services and consideration of introducing new roles would impact the roles and responsibilities of our Senior Practitioners directly.

The development of a career pathway would have financial implications related to learning and development.

Citizen impact:

Improving Children's Services will ensure the partnership works "*better together for children*" in Walsall so that they are safe, happy, healthy and with a brighter future. With greater capacity, stability and an improved culture through better career opportunities improved social work services will ensure that social workers are working with the right children in the right ways at the right time.

Environmental impact:

There is no potential environmental impact of this scrutiny exercise

Performance management:

Failure to adequately deliver sustained improvements to services and therefore meet the requirements of the Improvement Notice risks the safety and protection of children and young people. Delivery of the objectives in the Strategic Improvement Plan will be risk assessed and mitigated as appropriate.

The Improvement Board monitors progress and impact on a six weekly basis. This is in addition to developing service and partnership wide performance management and quality assurance arrangements. The Department for Education (DfE) also assesses and evaluates progress and impact on a 6 monthly basis. This will include written reports from the independent chair of the Improvement Board as well as other supporting evidence, including external review and inspection.

Equality Implications:


An equality impact assessment has not yet been carried out.

Consultation:

- Reported to Walsall Council Children's Services Improvement Board and Multi Agency Operational Group.
- Discussed and engaged with Walsall Safeguarding Children's Board, Specialist Services Heads of Service, Operational Managers, and Finance.
- To help inform and shape the statement and action plan the whole social work workforce have been consulted (via the Social Work 'Health Check' survey) with a group of Senior Practitioners also doing some focussed work.

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Report

1. Introduction

1.1 Strategic objective 2.2.1¹ obliges Walsall “to take action to improve stability in the social care workforce and reduce dependency on agency staff.” This report gives an overview of our current position; explores the likely impact of reducing agency staff; and proposes an action plan to ensure delivery.

2. Overview

2.1 Currently, our front line specialist social work services are comprised of 20 teams ranging from the Multi Agency Screening Team through to the Transition and Leaving Care Team (TLC).

2.2 We have 123.37 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) permanent Social Workers in post within these teams (including 16 Team Managers, 25.13 Senior Practitioners, 66.24 Social Workers and 16.00 Newly Qualified Social Workers). Further to this we have 58 agency Social Workers. Average caseloads range from 15.39 (in Family Placements) to 24.74 (in Transition and Leaving Care) with a total caseload of 2777 children. Family Placement workers do have some other obligations such as the recruitment and training of prospective adopters and foster carers.

2.3 The Turnover figure (1 April 2012 to 30 September 2013) for Social Workers and Senior Practitioners in permanent posts in Specialist Services is 17.45%. However, this is affected by an increase in leavers following our initial adverse inspection in June 2012. Turnover for the last three months (rather than a rolling 12) gives a more stable rate of 7.2%. Therefore we expect to see our turnover figure reduce shortly as the rolling 12 months moves past the high point for vacancies of last year. The turnover figure for agency staff is not collected but anecdotal evidence suggests it is higher as staff need only give a very short notice period and often move quickly for enhanced hourly rates or for smaller workloads. There is competition for agency workers in West Midlands authorities.

2.4 In comparison the corporate turnover rate is 14.31% (1 October 2012 – 30 September 2013).

2.5 Our vacancies stand at 22.5% of the total social work workforce within Children’s Specialist Services; 36 vacancies out of 159.37 FTEs (this includes Team Managers). Not including Team Managers there are 32 vacancies in total out of 139.37 occupied and vacant FTE positions, which is 22.9%. Comparatively the corporate figure is 15.09%.

2.6 We currently have 10 posts under offer, which could mean 26 vacancies and a vacancy rate of 16.3%.

2.7 Like many authorities, Walsall is experiencing the impact of a national social worker recruitment shortage. The countrywide lack of social workers in children’s services has been widely reported and is not an issue exclusive to Walsall. Research tells us that “discussions across the country have shown that local authorities are facing similar

¹ WALSALL CHILDREN’S SERVICES STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT PLAN FOR SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE - PHASE 2 2013 - 2014

challenges over recruitment and retention.”² Indeed many of the West Midlands councils are in the same position, which is driving a regional approach to financial and contractual arrangements with social work agencies. The DfE acknowledge the national issues but nonetheless is clear that Walsall needs a stable workforce in order to provide the best outcomes for its children and young people.

2.8 The majority of social workers recruited recently are Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW) who need to complete their Assessed Year in Practice before they can carry a full case load and child protection work. This means that it is not always possible to release one agency worker for every social worker recruited.

3. Agency Usage

3.1 Our primary concern and commitment is to ensure we have the right amount of social workers, with the right level of skill and experience, in the right posts so that Walsall are able to deliver a good service to our children, young people and families.

3.2 Accepting agency staff will always form a vital part of the social work workforce, Walsall needs to reduce an over-reliance on agency social workers.

3.3 We currently have 58 agency staff managing 934 cases. They are covering a mixture of vacancies, maternity leave and secondments and 27 of these are over establishment (meaning they are not allocated against any permanent positions). The majority of these over established positions were created immediately post the June 2012 Ofsted in order to quickly improve the quality of social work practice. We are now acutely aware that there were and are no quick fixes in terms of improving practice and the turnover of agency staff has been a barrier to improvement.

3.4 Last month the agency staff for our social work teams cost £254,860. We pay a weekly average premium of between £237.70 and £497.65 for agency staff.

3.5 Weekly premium of agency staff against permanent staff

Based on averages and including on costs for permanent staff

	Agency	Permanent	Premium
Social worker	1,126.98	806.28	320.70
Senior Practitioner	1,393.39	895.75	497.65
Team Manager	1,315.85	1,078.15	237.70

3.6 The 27 agency staff additional to capacity cost us on average £58,603 per year, meaning Walsall are spending on average £1,582,280 on additional social work capacity per year (£58,603 X 27).

3.7 If we were to operate within our present ‘footprint’ (i.e. our current FTEs plus our current vacancies (123.37 + 36] = 159.37 posts) absorbing the 934 cases held by agency workers, average caseloads would be affected adversely.

3.8 Setting target caseload ceilings as a guide would mean the creation of an additional 10.5 permanent social work posts to manage the current caseload of the service.

² Baginsky, M, 2013: p. 39. Retaining experienced social workers in Children’s Services: The challenge facing local authorities in England, Independent paper.

3.9 However, simply creating social work posts could cause other issues potentially adding to teams which are already large (particularly in Safeguarding and Family Support), stretching management and not allowing for the best support of NQSWs.

3.10 Instead there is active consideration of some smaller but important workforce changes such as the introduction of the roles of 'Deputy Team Manager' and 'Practice Educator'. A Deputy Team Manager would deputise for the team manager in his/her absence providing a 'business as usual approach', supervise some members of staff such as NQSWs and support the team manager in running and organising the team. The Practice Educator would take responsibility for any students in the team which will in turn enable the service to recruit high quality NQSWs, and support the senior practitioner to develop the team's learning environment. This would allow management more time to manage, make a 'career pathway' possible, and give Walsall the opportunity to play to its strengths in the recruitment market.

3.12 Creating a further 12 posts will help the ratio of Senior Practitioners to Team Managers move closer to 2:1; and the ratio of Newly Qualified Social Worker to Practice Educator could also move closer to 2:1, which will help us to assure the quality of social work in Walsall whilst also keeping to target caseload ceilings.

4. Savings

4.1 It would cost the service an additional £512,622 per annum to create 12 average mid-point social work posts.

4.2 Against the total amount of expenditure on agency staff additional capacity this could mean a reduction in cost of up to £1million.

In relation to costs reducing over time, the cost savings are not budget savings, they are reducing the overspend caused by the premium paid for agency staff.

5. Setting Targets

5.1

- We will aim to recruit and retain social workers to reduce our vacancies so that our rate is never more than 10% (which is 16 full time posts across a workforce of 159.37 occupied and vacant FTE positions).
- Accepting agency staff will always form a vital part of the social work workforce, we will aim to reduce an over-reliance on agency social workers. As such our aim is to reduce from 36.4% to 12% (which is 19.2 posts across a workforce of 159.37 occupied and vacant FTE positions).

5.2 It is important to recognise that potentially establishing a further 12 permanent posts (and increasing our social work footprint by 7.5%) is not an everlasting commitment. We can easily reduce our workforce within the year with acceptable turnover, should we choose not to fill but instead remove vacated posts when it is safe to do so.

6. Recruitment and Retention Approach

6.1 Our aim of reducing agency staff needs to happen in a way that is planned and sensitive to recruitment and retention.

6.2 Key to this is a clear offer to those whom we employ, and those who may potentially work in Walsall, of what they can expect from us; professional development with career options; quality line management, support and supervision; and manageable caseloads will be our standard.

6.3 We are currently working closely with HR and Adult Social Services to scope the feasibility of trialling and transferring social workers currently working in Social Care and Inclusion who are subject to compulsory redundancy. Building on their transferable skills and knowledge we are developing placements and are hopeful some of our vacancies will be filled with suitable experienced social workers following successful trial periods.

6.4 We aim to take a coordinated approach to recruitment by organising scheduled regular recruitment drives and assessment centres; the next being a breakfast event on 25th November with scheduled assessment centres and interviews in December and January 2014.

7. Action Plan

7.1 To summarise the Specialist Services Workforce Statement and Action Plan, we will;

- Negotiate and establish caseload ceilings for all social workers in all social work teams.
- Aim for our vacancy rate to remain less than 10% (which is 16 full time posts).
- Aim to reduce agency staff from 58 down to 19; with those additional to capacity (27) in the immediate term.
- As part of the potential reshape of children's services we will consider introducing the roles of Deputy Team Manager and Practice Educator.
- Develop a clear career pathway with progression points linked into training, qualifications, practice and pay.