

Medium Term Financial Plan

Initial Equality Impact Assessment of Budget Proposal 2024/25



1. The Proposal

Budget Theme:	Childrens transformation - Childrens social care services
Budget reference:	CHTR01
Budget proposal 2024/25 (£):	£1,837,000

The following savings are included within this Theme:

Directorate Reference	Service Area	Budget Proposal	2024/25 Budget reduction
CH03	Directorate Wide	Implementation of the council's Valuing Care programme which seeks to change the approach in how children currently in care and those on the edge of care are supported, ensuring that decisions are focused on their needs and best practice. Evidence shows that this will result in better outcomes for the children and young people, as well as achieve a reduction in costs and / or cost avoidance in the future.	£1,837,000

Theme Narrative:

The Valuing Care transformation programme is a complete re-set and re-design of how the council will deliver children's social care services in the future and aims to improve outcomes for those children who are currently looked after or on the edge of care by providing evidence based and needs focused services to support them.

All aspects of service delivery and the way we work will be reviewed to ensure that the social work teams, systems and processes and decision-making frameworks reflect best practice and are efficient and effective in supporting our children and young people.

The programme will enable the service to address some of the issues and challenges currently being faced, such as rising demand, complexity of need, staffing shortages and capacity issues within the marketplace, such as a lack of foster carers or suitable residential placements.

The council recognises that this work cannot be delivered in isolation and will continue to work with partners and stakeholders who also have a role to play in improving the outcomes for these children, as well as IMPOWER, who have been commissioned to support the programme, given their success in other councils.

Summary of changes:

Several components of the Valuing Care programme are still being developed which means that further and more detailed equalities assessments will be required. It is anticipated that this EIA will be reviewed in January 2024, with further updates planned for April, June, and September 2024.

Areas that are likely to change that could have an impact include:

- Social work teams and staffing structures – aim is to ensure that the council has enough staff in place and that these teams are structured and managed effectively.

A review will consider numbers of FTE's, grades, management, and leadership arrangements. This is not likely to have a detrimental impact on staff as the current position indicates a lack of capacity in this area; it is anticipated that proposals will deliver a positive impact for both the staff and children who are being supported.

- A proportion of children and young people will be stepped down from their current care provision the aim is to ensure that support provided by the council continues to meet the assessed need but reduces the support in some areas. Examples of change in this area could see a step down from a residential based setting into a foster care placement, or perhaps a step down from foster care to family-based care, where this may be considered appropriate. The care plans for individual children will continue to be monitored by their social workers and their independent reviewing officers to ensure that their needs are being met.

The council recognises that all children in young people in care have a right to family life which means that residential settings may not be an appropriate solution for most children to stay in until they are 18 and so in line with their care plan the council will look to step down children who are currently in residential or unregistered care placements to alternative forms of provision and / or potentially reunification with their families.

Significant work will be undertaken before changes could be considered by the new social care panels to increase the success of any potential proposals that are made including activity such as; regular reviews of care plans and needs assessments, provision of professional support and advice, provision of specialist training to carers, multi-agency approach, regular review meetings.

The benefit to children of this proposal would be having the opportunity to have their needs met in a family environment, we hope within the North Somerset area.

This would enable children and young people to be closer to the significant people within their lives and local services who will assist in our ability to support young people and plan for their transition to leaving care services more effectively. Given that a lot of residential placements are out of county, the distance between these and North Somerset can be a barrier when we are trying to support young people and provide them with the services they need. Stepping down young people into family-based placements within or closer to North Somerset will assist in removing these barriers.

Is any of the proposals within this theme a continuation of a previous medium-term financial plan saving?

Yes

No

If yes, please insert reference number and year of assessment?

Budget Proposal	Year of assessment	Budget Reference

If yes, please describe what steps you have taken to review the equality impacts from previous years?

N/A

2. Customer equality impact summary

Will the proposal have a disproportionate impact on any of these groups?

Insert X into one box per row, for impact level and type.

H = High, M = Medium, L = Low, N = None

+ = Positive, = = Neutral, - = Negative

Impact Level	Impact type						
	H	M	L	N	+	=	-
Disabled people (Including consideration of neurodiversity)				X			
People from different ethnic groups				X			
Men or women (including those who are pregnant or on maternity leave)				X			
People who are LGBTQ+				X			
People on a low income		X			X		
People in particular age groups		X			X		
People in particular faith groups				X			
People who are married or in a civil partnership				X			
People who are undergoing gender reassignment				X			
Other specific impacts, for example: carers, parents, armed forces community, impact on health and wellbeing. Please specify: Families of children who are looked after		X			X		

3. Explanation of customer impact

Children who are looked after are defined in part by their age and so are within a protected equalities group. A lot of children who are looked after also come from families who may have lower levels of income which means that money can often be an issue within the family.

