

Draft Initial Budget Equality Impact Assessment

1. The Project

Directorate: Children's Services

Theme or area: Review of Children's operating model

Lead Officer: **Claire Shiels**

Date: 3 December 25

Budget Reference	Budget Proposal	Budget reduction (£)		
		2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
CHS05.1	Review of Children's Services directorate, including operating models	£325,000	£305,000	

Description of the project:

The Government reforms ([Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive, DfE November 2024](#)) require Children's Services to introduce an integrated whole-system, child-centred approach to how we deliver services to children and families; making sure that help and protection is provided in a way that prioritises family-led, relationship-based support and solutions. Alongside social care reforms, there are also some significant policy changes coming through in respect of school and education policy with local authorities being required to implement increased safeguards for children missing education and those who are elective home educated, as well as taking a greater role in school admissions. In addition, the delayed SEND White paper is also expected to bring in significant changes and reforms.

As part of the government's aim to provide children with the best start in life and break down barriers to opportunity, the national [Families First Partnership \(FFP\) programme](#) requires services to work together and take a more joined-up, family focused approach to early help and child protection by establishing Family Help Teams and local Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPTs). These teams will be multi-disciplinary and will include a minimum of social care, police, health and education professionals undertaking interventions and statutory child protection investigations. A focus on family group decision-making will also be embedded and there is an ambition to create a single child's record across accessible not only to

children's services but also partners in health, education and the police to ensure the issues raised in the National child safeguarding practice review into the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson are addressed.

Over the next 12 to 24 months, this project proposes to review, redesign and re-organise our staff and services to reflect the changes required under the National Families First Partnership reforms. This will require the implementation of a new Children's Services operating model to incorporate the principles of Families First reforms.

The new operating model design principles will incorporate a strong focus on early intervention and the importance of all services (including the local authority, schools, health, police and community groups) working closely together to support families effectively. The goal is to ensure every family can access the right help and support when they need it, with a strong emphasis on early intervention to prevent crisis and improved outcomes for children and families. In terms of financial efficiencies, we expect to achieve these through the reduction of duplication, using additional funding received from central government, as well expecting to see a reduction in demand for crisis intervention over time.

Summary of changes:

For North Somerset, key components of the reforms will include the following changes to the operational delivery of services: moving to locality-based service delivery; the introduction of a conversational model in the Integrated Front Door; building on the strengths of existing universal and community based early help delivery models; developing a family help service with practitioners and social workers in the same team; as well as developing multi-agency child protection teams. This is alongside focused improvement and transformation work already underway to strengthen practice in the Integrated Front Door and the creation of Family Hubs.

Given the scales of change and the partnership approach envisaged this is a complex reorganisation both internally of our workforce but also how our partners integrate into a single system. It is worth highlighting that both the Police and Health are also going through significant reshaping of their services at this time.

Are 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?

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2. Customer equality impact summary

Will the changes proposed in this project have a disproportionate impact (or bias) for 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, - = Negative

Protected or significant group	Impact Level				Impact type	
	H	M	L	N	+	-
Disabled people (Including the consideration of neurodiversity)		X			X	
People from different ethnic groups				X		
Men or women (including those who are pregnant or on maternity leave)		X			X	
People who are LGBTQ+				X	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 significant groups, for example: Armed Forces Community, care experienced young people, carers, parents. Please specify:		X			X	

3. Explanation of customer impact

Please describe the reasons for the impact level in the table above, please include reasons for all areas, including those where you have assessed 'no impact' as it is important to understand why this is the case.

It is anticipated that the reforms will offer children and their families much swifter and early family help and support services accessible much earlier and outside of the statutory intervention where appropriate. It is also hoped that through the integration of professionals into the multi-disciplinary teams there will be a much swifter, robust approach to safeguarding children where statutory intervention is needed. These are all expected to have a positive impact for children and their families. We also anticipate the reforms being a lever for improving current service delivery which we recognised still needs improving in some aspects of our social care and SEND services.

Please describe how you will communicate these changes to those impacted.

A resident facing communications plan will be developed and will be informed by engagement with the NSPCF. Initial engagement has commenced with partner agencies, and a steering group has been established to ensure the operating is co-designed to ensure integration is achieved.

In respect of staff engagement and communication, there has been extensive engagement sessions with the whole of Children's Services workforce through a series of staff webinar sessions held over the summer. Further sessions are planned before the Christmas break and then again in the New Year to ensure staff are kept informed of progress.

In addition to this, senior management and leadership within Children's Services have been involved in some initial functional design of the new operating – this will continue up to and beyond formal staff consultation as we anticipate them taking an instrumental role in developing new practice standards for each of the new functional area.

There will be a formal HR process and consultation for all staff whose roles and responsibilities will likely change in order to meet the changes.

4. Staff equality impact summary

Are there any staffing implications for this proposal?

Yes

Explanation of staff impact

If yes, please describe the nature of the impact, including how many posts could be affected, please state whether they are vacant, or filled permanently or temporarily.

The staff implications will be assessed and worked through once the options for the new operating model have been developed.

5. Cumulative equality impacts

Is this project linked to or likely to have an impact on any other service areas?

For example are you moving the location of a service that may also be impacted upon by a change to public transport provision.

It is anticipated that through the creation of locality based services and Family Hubs that there should a positive impact to families by making services more easily accessible in their local areas.

For some staff currently based centrally there may be a change to their base location as we move to a localities model.

6. Action Plan

Are there any further actions that should be taken because of this Equality Impact Assessment?

Issue Identified	Planned Action	Lead Officer	Time for review

7. Review and Sign Off

Service Manager Review

Insert any service manager comments here.

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Is a further detailed equality impact assessment needed? Yes No

Please note that if this assessment indicates a potential 'medium' or 'high' impact on any protected or significant group a further, more detailed assessment will be required.

If 'yes', when will the further assessment be completed?

Service Manager: Claire Shiels

Date: 5 December 2025