

Public Document Pack



**North
Northamptonshire
Council**



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

Meeting: Joint Children's Trust Committee
Date: Wednesday 1st May 2024
Time: 10.00 am
Venue: Council Chamber, Corby Cube, George Street, Corby, Northants, NN17 1QG

To members of the Joint Children's Trust Committee

Councillor Fiona Baker (Chair), Councillor Lloyd Bunday, Councillor Scott Edwards, Councillor Matt Golby, Councillor Jonathan Nunn and Councillor Jason Smithers

Agenda			
Item	Subject	Presenting Officer	Page no.
01	Apologies for non-attendance		
02	Notification of requests to address the meeting		
03	Members' declarations of interest		
04	Minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2024		3 - 4
05	NCT Period 11 Forecast	David Watts/ Rebecca Wilshire	5 - 16
06	NCT Transformation and Efficiency Board Update	David Watts/ Rebecca Wilshire	17 - 30
07	NCT Voluntary Step In Progress Update	Mark Dickenson/ James Smith	31 - 38
08	Circle to Success Programme Update	David Watts/ Rebecca Wilshire	39 - 48
09	Urgent Business		

Sanjit Sull, Monitoring Officer
North Northamptonshire Council



Proper Officer

24th April 2024

This agenda has been published by Democratic Services.

Committee Administrator: Raj Sohal

☎ 07910 344766

✉ rajvir.sohal@northnorthants.gov.uk

Exempt and Confidential Information

Where there is a need for the Council to discuss exempt or confidential business, the press and public will be excluded from those parts of the meeting only and will be unable to view proceedings.

Members' Declarations of Interest

Members are reminded of their duty to ensure they abide by the approved Member Code of Conduct whilst undertaking their role as a Councillor. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **relates to** a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, you must declare the interest, not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless granted a dispensation.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which **relates to** other Registerable Interests, you must declare the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but must not take part in any vote on the matter unless you have been granted a dispensation.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which **relates to** your own financial interest (and is not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest) or **relates to** a financial interest of a relative, friend or close associate, you must disclose the interest and not vote on the matter unless granted a dispensation. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting.

Members are reminded that they should continue to adhere to the Council's approved rules and protocols during the conduct of meetings. These are contained in the Council's approved Constitution.

If Members have any queries as to whether a Declaration of Interest should be made please contact the Monitoring Officer at – monitoringofficer@northnorthants.gov.uk

Press & Media Enquiries

Any press or media enquiries should be directed through the Council's Communications Team to media@northnorthants.gov.uk

Public Enquiries

Public enquiries regarding the Authority's meetings can be made to democraticservices@northnorthants.gov.uk

Minutes of a meeting of the Joint Children's Trust Committee

Held at 2.00 pm on Wednesday 6th March, 2024 in the Council Chamber, Swanspool House, Doddington Road, Wellingborough, NN8 1BP

Present:-

Members

Councillor Lloyd Bunday
Councillor Scott Edwards
Councillor Jason Smithers

Councillor Fiona Baker
Councillor Matt Golby
Councillor Jonathan Nunn

Officers

Anna Earnshaw
Janice Gotts
Martin Henry
Stuart Lackenby
Raj Sohal
Sanjit Sull
David Watts

Chief Executive – WNC
Executive Director of Finance – NNC
Executive Director of Finance – WNC
Deputy Chief Executive – WNC
Democratic Services Officer – NNC
Interim Monitoring Officer – NNC
Interim Director of Children's Services – NNC
Acting Director of Children's Services – WNC

Rebecca Wilshire

Adele Wylie

9 Apologies for non-attendance

No apologies were received.

10 Notification of requests to address the meeting

None received.

11 Members' declaration of interests

No declarations were made.

12 Minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2024

RESOLVED that: The minutes of the meeting held on the 16th January 2024 be approved as an accurate record.

13 Review of Realisation of 2023/24 Savings Proposals

RESOLVED that: The report be noted.

14 NCT Transformation and Efficiency Board Update

RESOLVED that: The report be noted.

15 Urgent Business

The Chair thanked the Committee for their attendance and closed the meeting at 2:15pm.

Children’s Trust Joint Committee 1st May 2024

Report Title	NCT P11 Forecast
Report Author	<p>David Watts, Executive Director of Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing (DASS) & Director of Children’s Services (DCS) (interim), NNC, David.watts@northnorthants.gov.uk</p> <p>Rebecca Wilshire, Director of Children’s Services (acting), WNC, Rebecca.wilshire@westnorthants.gov.uk</p> <p>Richard Woodward, Head of Business & Performance (NNC)/Intelligent Client Function Programme Lead, richard.woodward@northnorthants.gov.uk</p>
Executive Member	<p>Cllr Fiona Baker – Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education, WNC</p> <p>Cllr Scott Edwards, Executive Member for Children, Families, Education & Skills, NNC</p>

Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there public sector equality duty implications?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Applicable paragraph number/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972	

List of Appendices

Appendix A NCT P 11 Finance Report Extract

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of the report is to provide an update on Northamptonshire Childrens Trust’s (NCT) P11 forecast.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. In accordance with the Service Delivery Contract (SDC) the Councils agreed a proposed 2023/24 Contract Sum of £150.938m with NCT for the delivery of its’

services at the meeting of the Strategic Group in November 2022. This was approved by both Councils and NCT's Board as part of setting each organisations budget for 2023/24.

- 2.2. The Contract Sum for 2023/24 included the delivery of £7.672m of savings identified by the Trust.
- 2.3. Agreed savings in the Contract Sum are netted off the Trust's budget meaning that non-delivery of any savings would be reflected as a pressure in the outturn for 2023/24 and it is likely that the Councils will have to fund this unless mitigations are found by NCT.
- 2.4. In their Period 11 Report (February 2024) presented to the Operational Group in April 2024, NCT reported a forecast position of £27.591m above the 2023 Contract Sum. This rises to £31.632m when £2.094m for agreed additional in year funding, £0.725 for costs outside of the contract sum and £1.222m of ICB income which is in dispute.
- 2.5. There are a number of known items that have yet to be included in NCT's forecast which include £0.200m for additional non delivered RAG rated savings and £0.708m relating to the transfer of support services to NCT. This takes the overall impact on the Councils to £32.540m above the Contract Sum agreed at the start of the year.
- 2.6. NCT have reported £5.055m of savings RAG rated as green meaning these are confirmed for delivery. They also reported £1.170m as amber meaning that these were likely to be delivered but are still yet to be confirmed and £1.447m as red meaning that these will not be delivered.
- 2.7. Appendix A NCT P11 Finance Report Extract sets out a detailed summary of the NCT's forecast and savings delivery including Circle to Success.
- 2.8. Pressures in the outturn for 2023/24 will need to be funded by the Councils unless mitigations are found by NCT. Funding of pressures is based on the contract split of 44.16% for NNC and 55.84% for WNC.

3. Recommendations

3.1. It is recommended that the Committee:

- a) Note NCT's P11 forecast of £31.632m above the contract Sum and progress to deliver savings outlined in this report including the non delivery of £1.447m of red rated saving.
- b) Note the overall impact on the Councils of £32.540m above the Contract Sum when items totalling £0.908m not currently in NCT's forecast are included.

3.2. Reason for Recommendations

For the Councils to maintain financial oversight of their ownership of and commissioning arrangements with NCT.

3.3. Alternative Options Considered

To do nothing – however this is not recommended. The recommendations set out in this report will allow the Councils to maintain financial oversight of their ownership of and commissioning arrangements with NCT.

4. Report Background

- 4.1. North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) and West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) are committed to supporting Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT) to deliver children's social care and targeted early help services across Northamptonshire. Both take their corporate parenting role very seriously and want to support children, young people and families to thrive in their community.
- 4.2. Children's Services in Northamptonshire were judged 'inadequate' by Ofsted in 2019.
- 4.3. Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT) was partially formed on 1st November 2020 and fully launched on 1st April 2021.
- 4.4. From 1st April 2021, after the abolition of Northamptonshire County Council, North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) and West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) became joint owners of Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT). Whilst NCT is operationally independent of the Councils, the Councils still retain significant control over NCT and are responsible for making decisions on a number of 'reserved matters' that are set out in the NCT's Articles of Association.
- 4.5. The agreed NCT Contract Sum for 2023/24 is £150.938m which includes £7.672m of savings identified by the Trust.

5. Issues and Choices

- 5.1. The Councils have established the Children's Trust Joint Committee to discharge the functions of the Councils that relate to ownership of NCT, the provision of support services to the Trust and consider relevant matters arising in relation to the delivery of children's early help and social care services and their financial position.
- 5.2. In their Period 11 Report (February 2024) presented to the Operational Group in April 2024, NCT reported a forecast position of £27.591m above the 2023 Contract Sum. This rises to £31.632m when £2.094m for agreed additional in

year funding, £0.725 for costs outside of the contract sum and £1.222m of ICB income which is in dispute.

- 5.3. There are a number of known items that have yet to be included in NCT's forecast which include £0.200m for additional non delivered RAG rated savings and £0.708m relating to the transfer of support services to NCT. This takes the overall impact on the Councils to £32.540m above the Contract Sum agreed at the start of the year.
- 5.4. Pressures in the outturn for 2023/24 will need to be funded by the Councils unless mitigations are found by NCT. Funding of pressures is based on the contract split of 44.16% for NNC and 55.84% for WNC.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1. The Children's Trust Operational Group will continue to monitor NCT's finance position.
- 6.2. It is expected that the provisional outturn position will be reported by NCT at the Operational Group in May 2024 followed by the final outturn at the June 2024 meeting.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1. Resources, Financial and Transformation

- 7.1.1. When the Trust was being developed, detailed work was completed to calculate how costs would be split between North and West Northamptonshire Councils. This was based on the relative populations and demand for children's social care services in each council area. It was agreed that WNC would contribute 56% and NNC would contribute 44% exclusive of any specific grants that are given directly to NNC or WNC to passport to the Trust.
- 7.2. The Period 11 report forecasts a total pressure of £31.632m There are a number of known items that have yet to be included in NCT's forecast which include £0.200m for additional non delivered RAG rated savings and £0.708m relating to the transfer of support services to NCT. This takes the overall impact on the Councils to £32.540m above the Contract Sum agreed at the start of the year.
- 7.3. Pressures in the outturn for 2023/24 will need to be funded by the Councils unless mitigations are found by NCT. Funding of pressures is based on the contract split of 44.16% for NNC and 55.84% for WNC.

7.4. Legal and Governance

- 7.4.1. The relationship between NCT and the Councils is governed by a series of contractual and legal agreements.

7.4.2. The recommendations set out in this report will allow the Councils to fulfil their responsibilities as set out in the Service Delivery Contract, the Articles of Association and Support Services Agreement in terms of oversight.

7.4.3. The arrangements provide a sound foundation so that the Councils are able to maintain an oversight whilst respecting the autonomy of NCT as a wholly owned company.

7.5. Relevant Policies and Plans

7.5.1. NNC has identified 'Brighter, Better Futures' as a key priority in its Corporate Plan recognising that children, young people and their families may need help at different stages in their lives. They will aim to provide help as early as possible and provide the right support, at the right time in the right way to ensure that children are safeguarded and get the best start in life.

7.5.2. WNC has identified 'Improved life chances: Best Start in Life' as a key priority of its Corporate Plan, including a focus on early help services to ensure children have the best start in life and parents have the right support at the right time from the right service, to enable families to thrive.

7.5.3. Both NNC and WNC's identified priorities will be achieved by supporting NCT to provide higher standards of support.

7.6. Risk

7.6.1. Both Councils have identified the failure of Northamptonshire Children's Trust to deliver services to the agreed standards and to sustain improvement in children's social care services as a risk on their strategic risk registers.

7.7. Consultation

7.7.1. This report has not been subject to any consultation.

7.8. Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel (NNC)

7.8.1. This report has not been considered by NNC's Executive Advisory Panel.

7.9. Consideration by Executive Leadership Team (WNC)

7.9.1. This report has been consider by ELT.

7.10. Consideration by Scrutiny

7.10.1. This report has not been considered by the overview and scrutiny committees of either NNC or WNC.

7.11. Equality Implications

7.11.1. There are no specific equality implications arising from this report.

7.12. Climate and Environment Impact

7.10.1 There is no specific climate impact arising from this report, however as NNC and WNC committed to considering impact on the environment which is managed via the individual strategic lead partnership organisation via organisational policy and commitments.

7.10.2 NNC, WNC and NCT are aware there are emissions associated with publishing web content and will seek to minimise the impact where possible.

7.13. Community Impact

7.13.1. There is no specific community impact arising from this report.

7.14. Crime and Disorder Impact

7.14.1. There is no specific crime and disorder impact arising from this report.

8. Background Papers

8.1. None

P11 Financial Position

1. Total Forecast Outturn Position

Heading	Period 7	Period 8	Period 9	Period 10	Period 11	Notes re period 11
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	
Staffing	0.732	1.045	1.485	1.556	1.990	The contract change request relates to the pay award funding of £1.007m and the innovate teams of £1.087m. Staffing bud forecasting to overspend by a further £2m due to the continued pressure on recruitment and use of agency staff and the in vacancy factor of £3.269m and a reduction in the income being received through the Supporting Families payment by resul This has previously been flagged as a risk (£392k)
Placements (Including Mother and Baby)	20.199	20.952	23.307	24.005	24.225	See Placements detail.
Transport	0.173	0.173	0.523	0.802	0.802	Invoices received to November 2023, estimated future costs provided by councils transport team. Reflecting the increases in inflation above the contract sum relating to transport provision and demand Forecast information p the councils
Other	0.311	0.313	0.313	0.497	0.574	Increased costs in childrens homes to ensure minimum staffing levels are maintained
Total	21.415	22.483	25.628	26.860	27.591	
Additional In year Funding	2.094	2.094	2.094	2.094	2.094	Additional funding for pay award and additional social work capacity
Additional Costs outside Contract Sum	0.725	0.725	0.725	0.725	0.725	
ICB Income in Dispute	3.616	1.499	1.222	1.222	1.222	A meeting is to be held with the ICB in April, this has been delayed following the SEND inspections. All informatio sent to support the claims.
Total	27.85	26.801	29.670	30.901	31.632	

P11 Financial Position

Contract Sum Budget Heading	Original Contract sum £000's	Contract Change Requests £000's	Revised Contract sum £000's	Projected Outturn Position £000's	Variance £000's	M'ment from P10	Notes
						£000's	
Staffing	49,732	2,094	51,826	53,816	1,990	434	The contract change request relates to the pay award funding of £1.007m and the innovate teams of £1.087m. Staffing budgets are forecasting to overspend by a further £2m due to the continued pressure on recruitment and use of agency staff and the inherited vacancy factor of £3.269m and a reduction in the income being received through the Supporting Families payment by results funding. This has previously been flagged as a risk (£392k)
Other Non-staffing Costs	358	0	358	358	0	0	Continued review of non-essential spend and reviews or mileage arrangements through the use of technology and utilisation of multi sites.
Placements	66,286	0	66,286	90,511	24,225	219	See detailed analysis in this report.
Contracts	5,001	0	5,001	5,001	0	0	Risk around above inflation cost for contracts. Impact of continuation of short breaks contract.
Children's Homes	3,767	0	3,767	4,058	291	77	Increased staffing projection to maintain staffing ratios. The majority of the budget pressure relates to Arnold house due to the level of staffing required to meet the complex needs of young people resident in this provision. Phoenix House has also incurred additional agency costs this year to cover maternity leave of the service manager.
Legal	4,788	0	4,788	5,298	510	0	Forecast at current demand levels. Risk remains around increasing fee rates and shareholders status.
Adoption	7,776	0	7,776	7,733	-43	0	Implementation of ombudsman's decision is factored into all projections. All historic payments have been made and included into the projection.
Transport	2,870	0	2,870	3,672	802	0	Based on current information provided through Transport SLA. Risk around increasing demand and above than budgeted inflation costs. The increased expenditure relates to increased demand for Transport.
Other Care	5,889	0	5,889	5,980	91	0	Current service reviews, risks around increasing demand and Joint funding arrangements with Health.
NCT Central	-762	0	-762	-1,037	-275	0	Risks around funding of demand led pressures and passporting of Funding. Delays in receipt of this funding will impact on the ability to continue investment.
Support Services	5,233	0	5,233	5,233	0	0	Figure provided by the Local Authorities for the delivery of the services to the Trust including the occupation of buildings. A review will take place of all services prior to the agreement of the 2024/25 contract sum negotiations.
Total	150,938	2,094	153,032	180,623	27,591	730	

P11 Financial Position

Impact on Councils

Area	Value
NCT P11 total forecast outturn position	£31.632m
Total	£31.632m
Items not reported in forecast	
Additional Red RAG'd savings not included in P11 forecast	£0.200m
22/23 – Part year impact of H&S and L&D TUPE'd to NCT. Reduced from SS but not included in NCT contract sum.	£0.208m
23/24 – Full year impact of H&S and L&D TUPE'd to NCT. Reduced from SS but not included in NCT contract sum.	£0.500m
Total items not reported	£0.908m
Total variance impact on Councils	£32.540m <i>Increase of £1.439m from P10</i>

P11 Financial Position

P11 Savings

Savings Proposals	SRO	2023/24	Red	Amber	Green	Mitigations	Total (A,G,M)	Comments
		£'000						
Review of Social Care transport, journey planning and contact through the Asset a management strategy	Andrew Tagg	100	0	100	0	0	100	Working with external providers to ensure providers are delivering transport as part of there weekly fee charges. Development of local provision to remove transport costs.
Review of placements supply (Homes)	Louise De Chiara	600	0	0	600	0	600	Based on current schedule of children's Homes places coming on stream. Additional capacity above savings target, linked to Circle to Success project savings as more local provision is developed to reduce reliance on the independent sector
Increase provision in supported accommodation	Louise De Chiara	240	0	0	240	0	240	Additional capacity for supported accommodation to reduce the costs in provision through the private sector. Partnership with the university underway
Review of Business Operations	Andrew Tagg	70	0	0	70	0	70	Part of the business admin review to more from a centralised model to direct service level , reducing management costs
Review of Children's Legal Costs	Olivia Ives	100	0	0	100	0	100	Ongoing implementation of best practice following the review undertaken in Nov 2022
Review of Contracts	Louise De Chiara	100	0	0	100	0	100	Review of contracts
Asset Management Strategy	Colin Foster	200	200	0	0	0	200	The property savings set for 2023/24 relating to One Angel Square are not been achieved this year and therefore this saving proposal has been changed to red. This pressure is not included in the P10 forecast.

P11 Financial Position

P11 Savings

Page 15

Increase in In house Fostering	Olivia Ives	620	620	0	0	0	620	A coordinated plan aimed at increasing the capacity and utilisation of existing carers. Review of the capacity of the current operating model to recruit and support a larger inhouse foster carer community. Creation of a new Foster Friendly Offer with contributions from the wider partnership. Revised comms and marketing plan aligned to a modern fostering agency. Capital plan to support carers.
Review of External placements to develop effective Joint Funding Commissioning	Olivia Ives/Andrew Tagg	627	627	0	0	0	627	Review terms of reference for the Multi Agency Resource panel. Agree a joint funding protocol with partners (Health and Education). Identification of Cohort and develop pipeline of cases for MARP. Revised and improved referral process. QA process for MARP cases
Review of Care provision	Olivia Ives	200	0	0	200	0	200	Review of care packages and continued work with Health partners around funding packages. Focus work on DCT packages
Review of Non Essential Budgets including mileage, supplies and provisions.	Andrew Tagg	50	0	0	50	0	50	Review of non essential spend through improved governance arrangements. Review of non essential travel
Review of Learning Development/ Social work academy	Louise De Chiara	65	0	0	65	0	65	Coordination of Social work academy and learning and development functions
Implementation of treasury management strategy	Andrew Tagg	900	0	0	900	0	900	£13m currently in investment. Payment of outstanding income and demand led pressures will allow the investment to £20m to achieve the remaining target. Timely passporting of grants and in year pressures will impact on delivery.
TOTAL		3,872	1,447	100	2,325	0	3,872	
Additional Valuing care (see NCT 3b)	Olivia Ives	3,200	0	1,070	2,130	0	3,200	See Valuing care programme board savings delivery forecast. Delivery based on medium assurance delivery. Potential mitigation from review of packages
Supporting families to stay together - valuing care (see NCT 18)	Debbie Lloyd	600	0	0	600	0	600	valuing care programme - cost avoidance element of the programme
TOTAL SAVINGS		7,672	1,447	1,170	5,055	0	7,672	

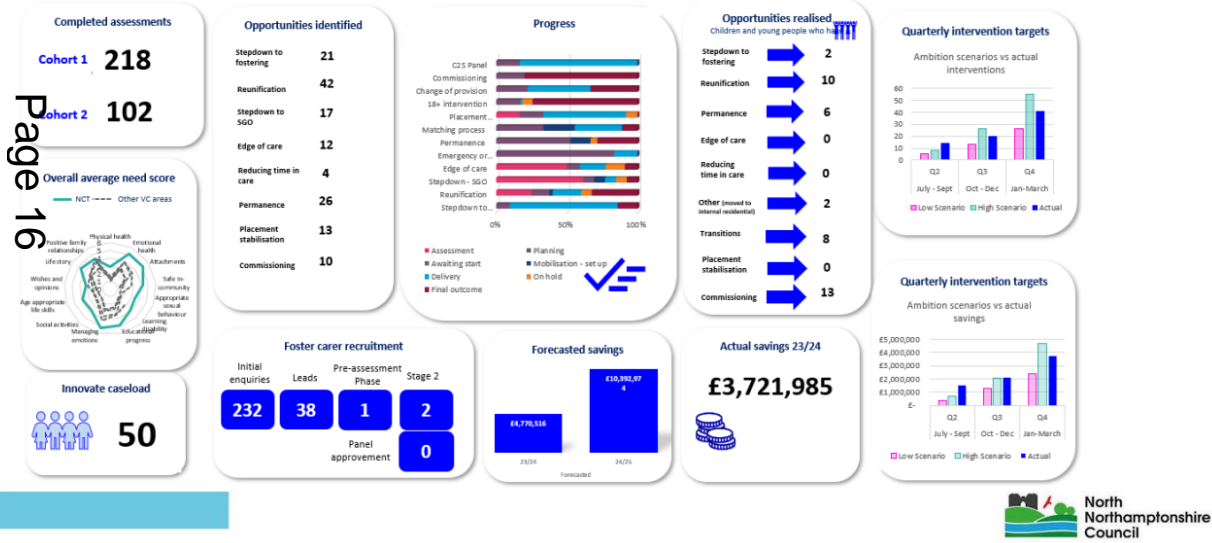
P11 Financial Position

As reported to C2S Board on T&E Board on 16th April 2024



Circle to Success

Summary dashboard



2023/24

- £3.722m actual savings delivered against a £3.8m target.
- £1m savings still flagged as Amber by NCT in P11 report due to a number of factors including young people in C2S who have moved into internal childrens homes and blocked 1 or more beds.

2024/25

- The Contract Sum for 24/25 details savings of £4.049m for C2S.
- C2S Board are forecasting savings of £8.072m an increase of £4.023m above that included in the Contract Sum

Children’s Trust Joint Committee

1st May 2024

Report Title	NCT Transformation and Efficiency Board Update
Report Author	<p>David Watts, Executive Director of Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing (DASS) & Director of Children’s Services (DCS) (interim), NNC, David.watts@northnorthants.gov.uk</p> <p>Rebecca Wilshire, Director of Children’s Services (acting), WNC, Rebecca.wilshire@westnorthants.gov.uk</p> <p>Sarah Reed, Transformation and Efficiency Director, NCT (secondment), Sarah.Reed@westnorthants.gov.uk</p>
Executive Member	<p>Cllr Fiona Baker – Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education, WNC</p> <p>Cllr Scott Edwards, Executive Member for Children, Families, Education & Skills, NNC</p>

Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there public sector equality duty implications?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Applicable paragraph number/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972	

Contributors/Checkers/Approvers

Approver	Officer Name	Date Officer Approved Report
Lead Members	<p>NNC – Cllr Scott Edwards</p> <p>WNC – Cllr Fiona Baker</p>	<p>Enter approval date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NNC – 19/4 no comments received • WNC – 19/4 no comments received
Monitoring Officer	<p>NNC – Sanjit Sull</p> <p>WNC - Sarah Hall/Catherine Whitehead</p>	<p>Enter approval date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NNC – 19/4 no comments received • WNC – 19/4 no comments received

Section 151 Officer/Deputy	NNC - Janice Gotts/Mark Dickenson WNC – Martin Henry/James Smith	Enter approval date: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NNC –19/4 no comments received • WNC – 19/4 no comments received
Other Director/SME	NNC - David Watts (DCS) WNC – Rebecca Wilshire (DCS)	Enter approval date: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NNC – • WNC – 18/4 comments received and incorporated into the report

List of Appendices

Appendix A - T&E Programme Overview

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of the report is to provide an update on Transformation and Efficiency activity that has been agreed at the Transformation and Efficiency Board and work that has commenced in the Trust relating to improving operational efficiency. All activities relate to improving outcomes for children and young people.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The Transformation and Efficiency Board was introduced in December 2023 as part of the informal step in arrangements. The remit of the board has three core responsibilities:
- 2.1.1. Transformation – providing strategic capacity and support to progress core children’s and joint Councils/NCT transformation projects and programme.
 - 2.1.2. Programme Oversight and Management – robust governance, plans and business cases.
 - 2.1.3. Right sourcing – considering/changing the delivery model or commissioning of services.
- 2.2. All are managed with a 3-way shared ownership and oversight of spend, benefits realisation and end user experiences and impacts.
- 2.3. Since the last report there have been two additional meetings of the Transformation Board alongside day-to-day operational support provided by seconded in transformation support. Appendix A provides a summary of the work programme.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. To note the contents of the report and progress made to date.

4. Report Background

- 4.1. North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) and West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) are committed to supporting Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT) and ensuring a whole system approach to transformation and efficiency.
- 4.2. Additional capacity to the Trust has meant that in the past few months, more capacity has helped to better understand the operations of the Trust and the inter-relationships with both councils alongside wider partners.
- 4.3. The Transformation and Efficiency Board was created in November 2023 and oversees the Transformation and Efficiency Programme which looks at NCT Core Transformation as well as Council and NCT Transformation activities.
- 4.4. In terms of spend within the Trust, the key significant areas of spend are Placements (approximately 50% of the Trust's budget) and Staffing (30%) with smaller percentages relations to Children's Homes and Adoption (approximately 6.5%).
- 4.5. To develop a comprehensive work programme, the work has been split into six key themes and they also align to the inspection framework supporting the improvement plan for both West and North's future Ofsted inspections of Children's Services.
- 4.6. **Commissioning and Procurement** – projects looking at how we deliver services, who delivers services and different models that deliver better outcomes, meet our needs and are more cost effective. This picks up the highest level of spend relating to placements.
- 4.7. **Demand Management and Early Help** – projects considering how we can reduce, delay or prevent demand and do more to stop escalating need. This picks up the work to help avoid more children and young people going into the Children's Trust and preventing demand as well as looking at how best to manage demand in NCT from front door to fulfilment of services and advice.
- 4.8. **Workforce** – projects that consider the development and makeup of the workforce. Again, this is one of the higher spending areas.
- 4.9. **Technology and Innovation** - systems and innovations that can support greater productivity through automation and reduced duplication.
- 4.10. **Operational Efficiency** – Reviewing how we do things to establish areas where we could reduce costs, optimise processes and reduce administrative burdens.
- 4.11. **Policy and Practice** - consideration of changes in approach, policy or practice interventions to drive improvement.

5. Progress on Improvement and Efficiency Activity

5.1 Commissioning and Procurement Update

Context - The average cost of a residential placement in 2023/24 is £281,000 or £5,400 per week with some plans costing over £1m and in the English marketplace there has been a 25% hike in prices in the past 2 years. Numbers of children going into care are vastly outstripping population growth, up 25% in 12 years. This correlates to rising poverty levels, impact of Covid and the national reductions to early intervention services.

NCT Overview - The number of placement packages in January 2024 was 682 with 135 being residential placements. There were also 92 placements being supported accommodation (Additional residential placements for 16–17-year-olds). In terms of fostering placements there were 346 and for over 18s there were 109 packages of care. During 2023/24 there were also a number of remand placements which were significantly more expensive placements due to the nature of the work.

Actions being Taken -

The biggest area of focus has been the use of **Circle to Success** to reduce the cost of placements by stepping children down and reducing the impact of children coming into care. The original savings target for 23/24 was £4.023m which has been taken off the contract sum but has now been increased to **£8.072m**.

Additional work has also been done looking for better value out of placements with independent foster carers and charging rates. This has identified another **£740k** of savings.

Regarding Care Leavers, additional work has been done looking at housing benefit usage and the saving target increased from £173k to £483k.

Work is also being done on sufficiency of placements and looking to provide alternatives from within Northamptonshire such as supported housing and care leavers accommodation. There are also plans to increase the number of children's homes - in 2023/34 19 new beds were established.

In terms of commissioning in the marketplace, the Trust is also pursuing the option of developing a strategic partnership with a provider as a way of stabilising placements and Value for Money (VFM).

There is also a work stream looking at the recruitment of foster carers with a saving target of **£300k**.

5.2 Demand Management and Early Help

Context – Demand within NCT often starts with a referral, often from other services in the community. There are key thresholds linked to a child being a child in need or a child looked after. By working earlier with families around early help and

signposting and support, it is likely that over time this will reduce demand coming into children's services.

National research indicates that key factors that impact of children's services are alcohol and drugs misuse, domestic violence, mental health and physical and learning difficulties – either directly with the child, the parents or other connected families/friends. The steep social grade t associative with all types of demand and particularly with child protection cases in relation to neglect, highlights the importance of polities that improve the financial circumstances of families - particularly around the cost-of-living crisis.

NCT Overview – Demand into the NCT is through one front door - the MASH and nearly 50,000 demands are seen each year. Most of the contact into MASH in 23/24 to date has been through the police (23%), education (19%) and health (19%). Out of 100 referrals which are all assessed by social worker teams, 18 result in a social work assessment and 67 result in signposting and advice (which could be done at a lower outside of the Trust as part of the early help system). There are also 25 cases that are likely to be re-referred which indicates need rising to then meet social work thresholds.

Actions being Taken -

The biggest area of work being done is on the **front door and redesign of MASH**. A business case and demand modelling are being conducted for May 24 with an aim to increase efficiency and raise the conversion rate from 18% to 34%. This work then links to the develop of the Early Help offer in both councils including the work with partners and development of online and face to face services. Work will also consider the out of hours arrangements (Emergency Duty Team) which is currently a combined service with adults out of hours service.

Work has also commenced looking at the **Supporting Families** programme and opportunities to draw down a greater percentage of the grant available through the development of the early help offer.

5.3 Workforce

Context – There are considerable national challenges about the recruitment and retention of social workers and in 2022 national figures showed the number of professionals had fallen for the first time, despite rising demand. A third of local authorities in 2022 cited staff recruitment and retention as a challenge with 5400 social workers leaving the progression, a 9% rise on the previous year and 21% increase in vacancies.

The changing needs of children and young people and families has also led to children's social work caseloads growing increasingly complex alongside a sharp rise in concerns relating to mental health.

NCT Overview – The budget for staffing has been under considerable pressure over the past few years and is impacted by the number of agency social work employed. 130 agency staff equate to the equivalent of an additional 39 staff (30% premium paid for agency staff). Within MASH agency workers equates to 38.5% and in Duty and Assessment it equates to 57%. There are fewer agency social workers in West

and North teams which then work with children and young people once assessed and through the court system (18%).

Actions being Taken - Work has commenced to support NCT to review workforce make-up and to review agency working, including initial conversation with OPUS to look for more direct agencies and strategies to try and move more staff to permanent roles. Work has also commenced to look at non-social work staff and look to opportunities to align teams and deliver better VFM. This includes also the maximisation of grow your own staff and the use of the apprenticeship levy.

5.4 Technology and Innovation

The new **Foster Care system, Charms** was successfully rolled out and the recent re-inspection by Ofsted resulted in the good rating. Work continues with the procurement of a **new case management system** for children's. There are significant benefits from implementing a new system immediately and opportunities for process improvements following roll out in 2025.

There is also work commencing looking at **automation and the use of AI** which could help with reducing and managing demand (MASH/early help) and with the considerable administrative burdens of activities such as Child Family conferencing.

Finally, work is also continuing with the deployment of appropriate **hardware** for staff and aligning this with the roll out of the new case management system.

5.5 Operational Efficiency

Office Optimisation roll out is continuing in both West and North. Within West there will be improvements made to OAS accommodation and more defined space for the NCT. The associated improvements made at Towcester will also lead to the development of the first physical Family Hub. Accommodation plans are progressing in the North with the development of improved office space across key sites and developing a leaving care site for North.

Legal Services work has commenced to accommodate the change in the model, moving from a service provided by Pathfinder Legal Services to a service provided by both councils.

5.6 Policy and Practice

There are considerable pieces of work associated with improving practice and quality of the offer and ensuring that there is sufficient support for both West and North. A key piece of work is the roll out of the new **Practice Model** – working with DfE.

Additional capacity has been agreed for 24/25 about independent review officers, independent visitors, work to capture the children's voice and life story experiences and supporting disabled children.

There has also been investment agreed for 24/25 about the development of a **Northamptonshire Exploitation hub** – to support families and children impacted by

exploitation including organised crime and sexual exploitation and the work linked to knife crime.

Additional external expertise has also been awarded by DfE for both councils about their early help and leaving care offers as well as some support around VFM This has been through the **successful bid for a sector led improvement partner (SLIP)**. this will be with North Yorkshire.

6. Issues and Choices

- 6.1 The work to date has been in response to the informal step in arrangements.
- 6.2 Following approval of business cases, progress is monitored by the Transformation and Efficiency Board.

7. Next Steps

- 7.1 Further business cases and updates on improvement activity and informal financial step in will continue and robust monitoring arrangements developed to ensure full benefit realisation are realised.

8. Implications (including financial implications)

8.1 Resources and Financial

- 8.1.1 When the Trust was being developed, detailed work was completed to calculate how costs would be split between North and West Northamptonshire Councils. This was based on the relative populations and demand for children's social care services in each council area. It was agreed that WNC would contribute 56% and NNC would contribute 44% exclusive of any specific grants that are given directly to NNC or WNC to passport to the Trust.
- 8.1.2 To support the Trust to deliver their business plan the Councils and NCT have agreed a provisional Contract Sum of £180.009m made up of block 1 core funding (£177.429m) and Block 2 transformation individual items (2.580m).
- 8.1.3 Block 2 transformation individual items funding of £2.580m includes £2.363m which is non-recurring.
- 8.1.4 WNC and NNC have made provision for a block 3 transformation costs totalling £3.291m. Use of this funding will be subject to business cases being presented to and approved by the Transformation and Efficiency Board.

8.2 Legal and Governance

8.2.1 The relationship between NCT and the Councils is governed by a series of contractual and legal agreements.

8.2.2 There are no immediate legal implications arising from the proposals. Consideration for specific legal implications is reviewed as part of the business case development and approval.

8.3 Relevant Policies and Plans

8.3.1 NNC has identified 'Brighter, Better Futures' as a key priority in its Corporate Plan recognising that children, young people and their families may need help at different stages in their lives. They will aim to provide help as early as possible and provide the right support, at the right time in the right way to ensure that children are safeguarded and get the best start in life.

8.3.2 WNC has identified 'Improved life chances: Best Start in Life' as a key priority of its Corporate Plan, including a focus on early help services to ensure children have the best start in life and parents have the right support at the right time from the right service, to enable families to thrive.

8.3.3 Both NNC and WNC's identified priorities will be achieved by supporting NCT to provide higher standards of support.

8.4 Risk

Risk summaries have been completed for each project and a programme risk register is being developed.

8.5 Consultation

Appendix A which details the project summary has been approved by the Transformation & Efficiencies Board has been reported at both the Children's Trust Operational Group and Strategic Group in March 2024.

8.6 Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel

This report has not been considered by NNC's Executive Advisory Panel.

8.7 Consideration by Executive Leadership Team (WNC)

This report has not been considered by WNC Executive Leadership Team

8.8 Consideration by Scrutiny

This report has not been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees of either NNC or WNC.

8.9 Equality Implications

There are no specific equality implications arising from this report.

8.10 Climate Impact

There is no specific climate impact arising from this report, however as NNC and WNC committed to considering impact on the environment which is managed via the individual strategic lead partnership organisation via organisational policy and commitments.

NNC, WNC and NCT are aware there are emissions associated with publishing web content and will seek to minimise the impact where possible.

8.11 Community Impact

There is no specific community impact arising from this report.

8.12 Crime and Disorder Impact

There is no specific crime and disorder impact arising from this report.

9. Background Papers

None

This page is intentionally left blank

Transformation & Efficiency Board Programme Plan

NCT T&E Programme																		
Programme	Project/ Workstream	SRO	Benefit £ '000	Feb-24	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25	Apr-25
Sufficiency Programme	Childrens Homes	Louise De Chiara	964															
	Supported Living																	
NCT Fostering Offer	Recruitment Review	Olivia Ives	300															
	Fostering Offer																	
Targeted Early Help	Targeted Early Help	Debbie Lloyd	600															
Placements Efficiency	Placement Efficiency	Olivia Ives	740															
Circles to Success	Circles to Success	Olivia Ives	3,200															
Maximising Housing Benefits for Care Leavers	Maximising Housing Benefits for Care Leavers	Louise De Chiara	169															
Exploitation Hub	Exploitation Hub	Trish Rynas	TBC															
Strategic Partnership	Strategic Partnership Business Case	TBC	TBC															
Residential Short Breaks Commissioning	Strategic Business Case	Louise De Chiara	TBC															
Disabled Children	Disabled Children's Options	Louise De Chiara																
Office Optimisation	Office Optimisation	Andrew Tagg	150															
System Replacements	Fostering and Adoption	Anna Earnshaw	n/a															
	Case Management System	Anna Earnshaw	n/a															
Legal Services	Legal Services	Andrew Tagg	417															
Joint Funded Placements	Joint Protocol Agreed	Andrew Tagg	2,000															
Transition to Adulthood	Care Leavers	TBC	627															
	EDT Disagg	EDT Dissagg	TBC															
MASH	MASH Review	TBC	TBC															

Page 21

Appendix

Stage
Concept (OBC)
Define (FBC)
Delivery (Highlight Reports)

Project Summary – Highlight reports are available in Appendix 1

Delivery

Ref it	Theme	Project Title	Current Stage	Current RAG	FBC Date	Benefits Profile 2023/24 '000	Benefits Profile 2024/25 '000	Comment
CP1	Commissioning and Procurement	Sufficiency Programme	Delivery	G	n/a	£840	£964	Benefits are on track to be delivered against profile, risk around Circle to Success having savings of beds allocated to them (circa £110k) however still on track.
OE2	Operational Efficiency	Circle to Success	Delivery	G	n/a	£3,800	£8,049	Benefits are on track for 2023/24 and target increased for the next year. Funding now agreed removing risk. Sustainability plan also reduces prominent risk.
OE3	Operational Efficiency	Office Accommodation	Delivery	G	n/a	£150	£200	
T1	Tech and Innovation	Fostering and Adoption	Delivery	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	
T2	Tech and Innovation	Case Management System Replacement	Delivery	G	n/a	n/a	n/a	
PP5	Policy and Practice	Placement Efficiency	Delivery	G	Dec 23	-	£740	Date for first Access to resources board pulled forward to 1 st March, brokerage officer for unregistered placements has started and benefits tracking underway.
OE5	Operational Efficiency	Maximising Housing Benefit Subsidy	Delivery	G	Dec 23	-	£403	Baseline had a target for 2023/24 of 35 claimants, current in year figure is 41. Potential exists to pull the saving from 2025/26 forward adding £83k.
DM 2	Demand Management	Exploitation Hub	Define	G	Feb 24	-	-	Recruitment process is currently underway.

Project Summary

Define

Ref it	Theme	Project Title	Current Stage	Current RAG	FBC Due Date	Benefits Profile 2023/24 '000	Benefits Profile 2024/25 '000	Comment
CP3	Commissioning and Procurement	NCT Fostering Offer	Define	G	Mar 24	TBC	£300	FBC is on the agenda for this board
CP6	Commissioning and Procurement	Residential Short Breaks	Define	G	May 24	TBC	TBC	
DM 3	Demand Management	MASH Review	Define	G	May 24	TBC	TBC	Data modelling is progressing well, workshop to process map revised operating model scheduled for 28 th Feb.
DM 4	Demand Management	Universal Early Help	Define	G	Mar 24	TBC	TBC	
PP1	Policy and Practice	Joint Funding	Define	R	Apr 24	-	£2,000	
CP2	Com and Procurement	Transition to Adulthood	Define	G	March 24	-	£627	
CP4	Com and Procurement	EDT Dissagg	Define	G	TBC			
PP5	Policy and Practice	Disabled Children Support	Define	G	Mar 24	-	-	FBC on the agenda
OE1	Operational Efficiency	Legal Services	Design	R	Mar 24	-	£417	Uncertainty over the decision and direction of travel and the relevant plans, financial models etc. have raised the risk profile.
OE4	Operational Efficiency	Direct Payments	Design	G	Mar 24	-	£100	This is a financial control mechanism and therefore not project based delivery or at risk, propose to remove and report through OG
CP5	Commissioning and Procurement	Strategic Partnership	Concept	A	Apr 24	TBC	TBC	Expression of interest drafted, agreed with procurement colleagues and release to the market for consideration ahead of project plan. Risk profile has increased due to early conversations with suppliers and therefore forms exception report on agenda.

This page is intentionally left blank

Children’s Trust Joint Committee 1st May 2024

Report Title	Voluntary Step in Progress Update
Report Author	Mark Dickenson, Assistant Director of Finance & Strategy, NNC, Mark.Dickenson@NorthNorthants.gov.uk James Smith, Assistant Director of Finance & Strategy (Deputy S151), WNC, James.Smith@WestNorthants.gov.uk
Executive Member	Cllr Fiona Baker – Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education, WNC Cllr Scott Edwards, Executive Member for Children, Families, Education & Skills, NNC

Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there public sector equality duty implications?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Applicable paragraph number/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972	

List of Appendices

None

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of the report is to provide an update on the progress of the Voluntary Step In (VSI) agreed undertaken jointly with Northamptonshire Childrens Trust’s (NCT).

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. It’s important to note that the VSI arrangements did not look at decision making within the trust, and they do not have the ability to influence, instruct, or fetter NCT’s operational independence, it was simply a process of collectively reviewing the strength of financial management arrangements in place, from the information provided by NCT and providing support and advice where improvements were identified.

- 2.2. Detailed finance led reviews informed a position statement against a number of agreed areas of review, which utilised the skill set of subject matter experts, provided from both councils working closely with NCT's Head of Finance. The output and impact of these reviews were then discussed with both councils Assistant Directors of Finance and NCT's Director of Finance with progress reports, outputs and agreed actions then provided to the NCT Transformation and Efficiency Board which then allowed a wider review and discussion of the findings.
- 2.3. Of the 13 headline areas of review all have commenced, 10 have been completed, with the findings discussed with the NCT Transformation & Efficiency Board with follow up actions logged and regularly reviewed, with the remaining 3 awaiting year end confirmation of figures. Throughout the process a number of improvements and reporting updates have been put in place supporting improved financial management practices.

3. Recommendations

3.1. It is recommended that the Committee:

- a) Note the progress and workstreams that are to be completed as summarised in the Table at Section 5.1.

3.2. Reason for Recommendations

For the Councils to maintain financial oversight of their ownership of and commissioning arrangements with NCT.

3.3. Alternative Options Considered

To do nothing – however this is not recommended. The recommendations set out in this report will allow the Councils to maintain financial oversight of their ownership of and commissioning arrangements with NCT.

4. Report Background

- 4.1. In September 2023, West Northamptonshire Council (WNC), North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) and Northamptonshire Childrens Trust (NCT) collectively agreed for the two councils to provide support, advice and provide a 'critical friend' challenge to NCT with regards to their financial management practices, under the guise of a 'voluntary step in' (VSI) arrangement alongside the creation of the 'NCT Transformation & Efficiency Board'.
- 4.2. The VSI arrangements have support from all three organisations Chief Executives, political leadership, NCT Board as well as the DfE and was created to provide backward looking and existing financial assurance work in

conjunction with the NCT Transformation & Efficiency Board which was focussed on adding pace to new initiatives which would ultimately reduce costs and improve outcomes for children.

4.3. The terms of reference for VSI arrangements are set out below;

- To seek assurance on a range of financial management areas.
- A collaborative way of working between WNC, NNC and NCT, ensuring all parties are engaged, sighted and agreed on the scope and nature of the programme of work.
- To unblock any financial issues identified throughout the process.
- To provide regular updates and escalations to the 'NCT Transformation & Efficiency Board'.

4.4. The key working arrangements agreed were as follows;

- The review would be 'proportionate' and not overly time consuming in terms of data gathering or analysis.
- The majority of the reviews would be completed by 31st March 2024.
- Both councils would supply subject matter experts to work with NCT on the detail.
- The councils could not 'instruct' or 'direct' on matters, but request and work collaboratively with NCT.
- The councils would not go direct to NCT staff members but would seek agreement and channel requests through the Director of Finance.
- Where issues were identified through the process, these would be addressed as the review went along, rather than be left and simply retrospectively reported. This would ensure continual improvement throughout the process.

4.5. Its important to note that the VSI arrangements did not look at decision making within the trust, or have the ability to influence, instruct, or fetter NCT's operational independence, it was simply a process of collectively reviewing the strength of financial management arrangements in place, from the information provided by NCT and providing support and advice where improvements were identified.

4.6. Detailed finance led reviews informed a position statement against a number of agreed areas of review, which utilised the skill set of subject matter experts, provided from both councils working closely with NCT's Head of Finance. The output and impact of these reviews were then discussed with both councils Assistant Directors of Finance and NCT's Director of Finance with progress reports, outputs and agreed actions then provided to the NCT Transformation and Efficiency Board which then allowed a wider review and discussion of the findings.

5. Issues and Choices

5.1. The table below sets out the summarised areas of review by financial management theme, and the high-level outcomes of the reviews to date.

Area of Review	Outcome	Progress
2021-22 Financial Position * NB excludes joint funding income risk which is covered as a separate item.	Assurance of the final year end positions and associated reporting arrangements following review of ledger entries and auditor reports	Completed
2022-23 Financial Position * NB excludes joint funding income risk which is covered as a separate item.	Assurance of the final year end positions and associated reported arrangements review of ledger entries, but pending the final audit report.	Completed (subject to final review of External Audit report)
2023/24 Forecasting Review	Assurance on the production of in year forecast outturn is still being reviewed, and subject to the final outturn position in order conclude this activity	In progress
Delivery of 2023/24 Savings	2023/24 savings delivered with identification risks/issues and plans for management action to bring delivery back on track or mitigations in place is subject to the final outturn position in order to conclude this activity	In progress
Invest to save and one-off funding	Assurance of the use additional investment outside of the contract sum and one-off funding	Completed
Area of Review	Outcome	Progress
2024 / 25 Contract Sum & Savings requirement review	Ensuring Council wide reviews of the reasonableness of key assumptions within the proposed Contract Sum for 2024/25	Completed
Grants	Government grants used in line with terms and conditions of the grant and enhanced reporting requirements agreed	Completed
Chief Officer and Member Engagement	Improved engagement and oversight by Chief Officers and Elected Members through additional informal meetings, councillor invites to NCT Board sub-committees, and closer officer working on financial reporting	Completed
Treasury Management	Specialist advice provided to improve the effectiveness of treasury management practices and strategy.	Completed
Review of key risks & the Financial	Assurance of key risks and a financial control environment with clearly defined	Completed (subject to conclusion internal

Control Environment	policies and procedures to inform the annual internal audit plan.	audit field work, this is due for finalisation in April 2024)
Financial KPI	Agree to temporarily suspend target/tolerance for KPI 19	Completed
Council financial reporting	Engagement with NCT in Council financial reporting	Completed
Income risk	Review of reasonableness of aged debt and provision and updates on recovery of material debts is subject to the resolution of a number of queried invoices raised to debtors which is being closely monitored.	In progress

5.2. Of the 13 headline areas of review all have commenced, 10 have been completed, with the findings discussed with the NCT Transformation & Efficiency Board with follow up actions logged and regularly reviewed, with the remaining 3 awaiting year end confirmation of figures. Throughout the process a number of improvements and reporting updates have been put in place supporting improved financial management practices.

6. Next Steps

6.1. As per the Table at 5.1 above work will continue on the workstream that are still in progress with further updates to the committee.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1. Resources, Financial and Transformation

7.2. The Childrens Trust report their financial position to each Council on a monthly basis following their Board approval of their management accounts. The voluntary step in review enabled a deeper understanding from the Councils of the financial issues, risks and assumptions that underpin the Trust financial position, and provided the Trust with support and guidance on a range of financial issues.

7.3. Legal and Governance

7.3.1. The relationship between NCT and the Councils is governed by a series of contractual and legal agreements.

7.3.2. The recommendations set out in this report will allow the Councils to fulfil their responsibilities as set out in the Service Delivery Contract, the Articles of Association and Support Services Agreement in terms of oversight.

7.3.3. The arrangements provide a sound foundation so that the Councils are able to maintain an oversight whilst respecting the autonomy of NCT as a wholly owned company.

7.4. Relevant Policies and Plans

7.4.1. NNC has identified 'Brighter, Better Futures' as a key priority in its Corporate Plan recognising that children, young people and their families may need help at different stages in their lives. They will aim to provide help as early as possible and provide the right support, at the right time in the right way to ensure that children are safeguarded and get the best start in life.

7.4.2. WNC has identified 'Improved life chances: Best Start in Life' as a key priority of its Corporate Plan, including a focus on early help services to ensure children have the best start in life and parents have the right support at the right time from the right service, to enable families to thrive.

7.4.3. Both NNC and WNC's identified priorities will be achieved by supporting NCT to provide higher standards of support.

7.5. Risk

7.5.1. Both Councils have identified the failure of Northamptonshire Children's Trust to deliver services to the agreed standards and to sustain improvement in children's social care services as a risk on their strategic risk registers.

7.6. Consultation

7.6.1. This report has not been subject to any consultation.

7.7. Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel (NNC)

7.7.1. This report has not been considered by NNC's Executive Advisory Panel.

7.8. Consideration by Executive Leadership Team (WNC)

7.8.1. This report has not been considered by ELT, but WNC Chief Officers who attend the Transformation & Efficiencies Board have considered this report.

7.9. Consideration by Scrutiny

7.9.1. This report has not been considered by the overview and scrutiny committees of either NNC or WNC.

7.10. Equality Implications

7.10.1. There are no specific equality implications arising from this report.

7.11. Climate and Environment Impact

7.11.1 There is no specific climate impact arising from this report, however as NNC and WNC committed to considering impact on the environment which is managed via the individual strategic lead partnership organisation via organisational policy and commitments.

7.11.2 NNC, WNC and NCT are aware there are emissions associated with publishing web content and will seek to minimise the impact where possible.

7.12. Community Impact

7.12.1. There is no specific community impact arising from this report.

7.13. Crime and Disorder Impact

7.13.1. There is no specific crime and disorder impact arising from this report.

8. Background Papers

8.1. None

This page is intentionally left blank

Children’s Trust Joint Committee

1st May 2024

Report Title	Circle to Success Programme Update
Report Author	<p>David Watts, Executive Director of Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing (DASS) & Director of Children’s Services (DCS) (interim), NNC, David.watts@northnorthants.gov.uk</p> <p>Rebecca Wilshire, Director of Children’s Services (acting), WNC, Rebecca.wilshire@westnorthants.gov.uk</p> <p>Richard Woodward, Head of Business & Performance (NNC)/Intelligent Client Function Programme Lead, richard.woodward@northnorthants.gov.uk</p>
Executive Member	<p>Cllr Fiona Baker – Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education, WNC</p> <p>Cllr Scott Edwards, Executive Member for Children, Families, Education & Skills, NNC</p>

Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there public sector equality duty implications?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Applicable paragraph number/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972	

List of Appendices

Appendix A Circle to Success Highlight Report Apr 24

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of the report is to provide an update on Northamptonshire Childrens Trust’s (NCT) Circle to Success Programme.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The Circle to Success Programme was established in February 2023 chaired by the Director of Children’s Services in WNC.

- 2.2. The Councils agreed invest to save funding of £1.816m in 2023/24 and £1.690m in 2024/25
- 2.3. The Circle to Success Programme has brought significant additional capacity to NCT from Innovate Therapeutic Services and IMPOWER embedding the Valuing Care approach in the delivery of services in NCT.
- 2.4. The programme delivered £3.722m of savings in 2023/24 and, as reported to the Transformation & Efficiency Board in February 2024, is forecasting savings of £8.072m in 2024/25 which is an increase of £4.023m above that included in the Contract Sum.
- 2.5. The Councils and NCT agreed to transition the oversight of the Circle to Success Programme to the Transformation & Efficiencies Programme from 1st March 2024.
- 2.6. The Transformation & Efficiencies Board will continue to monitor the Circle to Success Programme and track the delivery of its forecasted savings.
- 2.7. Further updates on Circle to Success will be brought to the Childrens Trust Joint Committee through the Transformation & Efficiencies updates.

3. Recommendations

3.1. It is recommended that the Committee:

- a) Note the success of the programme in 2023/24 and the delivery of the £3.8m savings target and delivery of positive outcomes for 41 children and young people to date.
- b) Note, as reported to the Transformation & Efficiency Board in February 2024, the forecast savings of £8.072m in 2024/25 which is an increase of £4.023m above that included in the Contract Sum.

3.2. Reason for Recommendations

To ensure that as owners and commissioners of the Childrens Trust the Councils maintain oversight of NCT's delivery of the Circle to Success Programme, support the Trust to realise its full potential and fully embed the approach into its business as usual by 31st March 2025.

3.3. Alternative Options Considered

To do nothing – however this is not recommended. The recommendations set out in this report will allow the Councils to maintain oversight of the Circle to Success Programme via the Transformation & Efficiencies Board.

4. Report Background

- 4.1. As part of developing the Northamptonshire Children's Trust Contract Sum for 2023/24 it was agreed to establish the Circle to Success Programme.
- 4.2. Included in NCT savings proposals for 2023/24 was £3.8m of savings to be delivered through the Circle to Success Programme for which the Councils agreed a mixture of one off invest to save funding of £1.3m outside of the Contract Sum.
- 4.3. Of this £0.968m was passed directly to NCT to commission additional delivery capacity from Innovate Therapeutic Services at a cost of £0.848m with the remainder used by NCT to fund time limited programme management capacity.
- 4.4. £0.324m was retained by the Councils to commission IMPOWER's Valuing Care approach for 5 months, which has a proven track record of delivering improved outcomes for children and families and reducing the costs of service delivery. The Councils successfully bid for and received £0.330m of grant funding from the DfE to part fund this.
- 4.5. In June 2023, following a request by NCT, the Councils agreed to additional investment in IMPOWER for a second phase of work at a cost of £0.516m taking the total invest to save funding to £1.816m which is reduced to £1.516m when taking the DfE grant into consideration.
- 4.6. Reporting into the Children's Trust Operational Group the programme board was established in February 2023, chaired by the Director of Children's Services in WNC, supported by the Assistant Director for Commissioning & Partnerships in NNC as vice chair. Additional members of the board consisted of key staff from NCT, Innovate Therapeutic Services and IMPOWER.
- 4.7. The Circle to Success Programme has brought significant additional capacity to NCT from Innovate Therapeutic Services and IMPOWER to support them to embedding the Valuing Care approach in the delivery of services.
- 4.8. Embedding the Valuing Care assessment approach has enabled NCT to better understand the needs of children to improve support and sufficiency resulting in significant reductions in spend and demonstrable improvements in need.
- 4.9. NCT have completed Valuing Care Assessments for 320 children across two cohorts identifying possible alternative care pathways through assessment and scoring across thirteen domains of need.
- 4.10. Commissioning Innovate Therapeutic Services to provide support to NCT with dedicated managed social work and therapeutic interventions has enabled NCT

to deliver on the opportunities identified from the Valuing Care assessments improving outcomes for children and reducing cost to the Councils.

- 4.11. Up to March 2024 Circle to Success has delivered positive interventions to 41 children and young people delivering actual savings of £3.722m. Appendix A Circle to Success Highlight Report Apr 24 provides a detailed update on the delivery of the programme and its impact.
- 4.12. The Councils and NCT agreed to transition the oversight of the Circle to Success Programme to the Transformation & Efficiencies Programme from 1st March 2024.
- 4.13. As part of agreeing the Contract Sum for 2024/25 in November 2023 the Councils agreed a further £1.28m invest to save funding to allow the continuation of support from Innovate Therapeutic Services and a reduced level of support from IMPOWER. At the same time savings of £4.049m were also agreed and top sliced of the contract sum.
- 4.14. On 1st February 2024 the Transformation & Efficiencies Board agreed to fund further one-off funding of £0.410m to sustain the IMPOWER elements of the Circle to Success programme to ensure that the full £8.072m could be delivered. This additional funding was conditional on NCT ensuring that the programme activity is transitioned into its business as usual operations by 31st March 2025.
- 4.15. This takes the total invest to save funding agreed for 2024/25 to £1.69m.
- 4.16. The Circle to Success programme is currently forecasting savings of £8.072m in 2024/25 which is an increase of £4.023m above that included in the Contract Sum.

5. Issues and Choices

- 5.1. Following the successful delivery of the Circle to Success Programme including the positive impact on outcomes for 41 children and the achievement of the savings target of £3.8m in 2023/24 a further period of investment to build on this success was agreed.
- 5.2. The strategic significance of the programme and its positive impact merits oversight by the Transformation & Efficiencies Board which is jointly chaired by the Chief Executives of the Councils.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1. The Transformation & Efficiencies Board will continue to monitor the Circle to Success Programme and track the delivery of its forecasted savings.

- 6.2. Further updates on Circle to Success will be brought to the Childrens Trust Joint Committee through the Transformation & Efficiencies updates.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1. Resources, Financial and Transformation

- 7.1.1. The financial implications are considered throughout the previous sections of this report.

7.2. Legal and Governance

- 7.2.1. The relationship between NCT and the Councils is governed by a series of contractual and legal agreements.
- 7.2.2. The recommendations set out in this report will allow the Councils to fulfil their responsibilities as set out in the Service Delivery Contract.

7.3. Relevant Policies and Plans

- 7.3.1. NNC has identified 'Brighter, Better Futures' as a key priority in its Corporate Plan recognising that children, young people and their families may need help at different stages in their lives. They will aim to provide help as early as possible and provide the right support, at the right time in the right way to ensure that children are safeguarded and get the best start in life.
- 7.3.2. WNC has identified 'Improved life chances: Best Start in Life' as a key priority of its Corporate Plan, including a focus on early help services to ensure children have the best start in life and parents have the right support at the right time from the right service, to enable families to thrive.
- 7.3.3. Both NNC and WNC's identified priorities will be achieved by supporting NCT to provide higher standards of support.

7.4. Risk

- 7.4.1. Both Councils have identified the failure of Northamptonshire Children's Trust to deliver services to the agreed standards and to sustain improvement in children's social care services as a risk on their strategic risk registers.

7.5. Consultation

- 7.5.1. This report has not been subject to any consultation.

7.6. Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel (NNC)

- 7.6.1. This report has not been considered by NNC's Executive Advisory Panel.

7.7. Consideration by Executive Leadership Team (WNC)

7.7.1. This report has been considered by ELT.

7.8. Consideration by Scrutiny

7.8.1. This report has not been considered by the overview and scrutiny committees of either NNC or WNC.

7.9. Equality Implications

7.9.1. There are no specific equality implications arising from this report.

7.10. Climate and Environment Impact

7.10.1 There is no specific climate impact arising from this report, however as NNC and WNC committed to considering impact on the environment which is managed via the individual strategic lead partnership organisation via organisational policy and commitments.

7.10.2 NNC, WNC and NCT are aware there are emissions associated with publishing web content and will seek to minimise the impact where possible.

7.11. Community Impact

7.11.1. There is no specific community impact arising from this report.

7.12. Crime and Disorder Impact

7.12.1. There is no specific crime and disorder impact arising from this report.

8. Background Papers

8.1. None

Circle to Success (Valuing Care)

Project Details	
Dept	Corporate Parenting
SRO	Olivia Ives
PM	Impower/Innovate/Gareth Darby
Project Phase	Delivery

Decisions required

Project Status		Date 21/03/2024	
Overall Current	Green	Previous	Green
Benefits	●	£3,721,985 PYE	
Budget	●		
Resources	●		
MTFP Savings			

Current Reportable Risks and Issues			Current Status
			Amber
Previous RAG	New RAG	Risk/ Issues	Mitigation
Page 45		Savings cross over with other project lines	Savings associated with the C2C cohort are captured & attributed to the workstream prior to reporting
45		Absence of plan to implement as BAU	Sustainability assessment completed and reviewed, supporting the development of long-term plan to embed
		Lack of placements due to market sufficiency	Continued efforts with foster carer recruitment. Reviewing support offers and focus on utilising and supporting in-house cares to improve matching. In addition, further focus on FGC to support reunification where possible.

MTFP	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	Total
Original	£3.78m				
Revised					

Milestones		Current Status
		Green
<p><u>Achieved</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 320 VCARE assessments received 60 SWs, APs and Managers trained in safeguarding service C2S Forum used to identify opportunities to support 63 children so far 78% of forecasted saving achieved YTD (02/24) Innovate regularly at capacity Shared approach with providers at 27 Feb event and identified opportunities to work together to meet CYP's needs 	<p><u>Planned</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to expand cohort beyond initial 246 into BAU activity, supported by work to embed VCARE into streamlined processes Ensure all CIC SWs trained and continue to increase numbers trained in safeguarding Develop new, collaborative approach to family finding to test and trial with providers Link to placement sufficiency measures 	

SRO Comment:

The project has been successful to date with the majority of the initial cohort having their needs understood via a Circle to Success assessment.

As a result, a range of opportunities are being explored to promote positive outcomes for children and young people. We have achieved great results, particularly in the areas of re-balancing provision of care to needs, permanence and re-unifying children and young people with parents and families.

Savings are being realised ahead of forecast resulting from the positive outcomes we have seen.

We have started to expand the cohort and embed the Circle to Success model to achieve more great outcomes for children and families.

Appendix

Circle to Success



Summary dashboard

Page 46

Completed assessments

Cohort 1 **218**

Cohort 2 **102**

Overall average need score

— NCT — Other VC areas



Innovate caseload

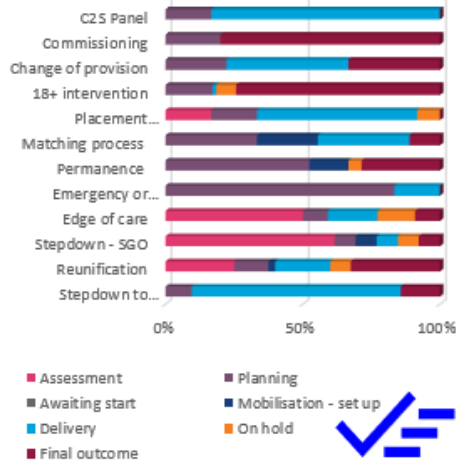


50

Opportunities identified

Stepdown to fostering	21
Reunification	42
Stepdown to SGO	17
Edge of care	12
Reducing time in care	4
Permanence	26
Placement stabilisation	13
Commissioning	10

Progress



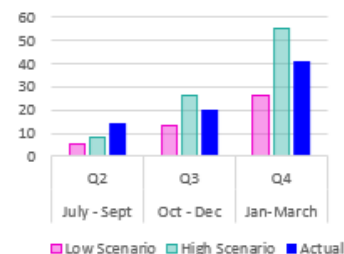
Opportunities realised

Children and young people who have...

Stepdown to fostering	2
Reunification	10
Permanence	6
Edge of care	0
Reducing time in care	0
Other (moved to internal residential)	2
Transitions	8
Placement stabilisation	0
Commissioning	13

Quarterly intervention targets

Ambition scenarios vs actual interventions



Foster carer recruitment

Initial enquiries	Leads	Pre-assessment Phase	Stage 2
232	38	1	2
Panel approval			0

Forecasted savings



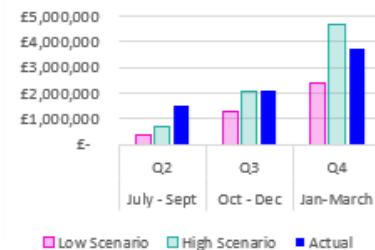
Actual savings 23/24

£3,721,985



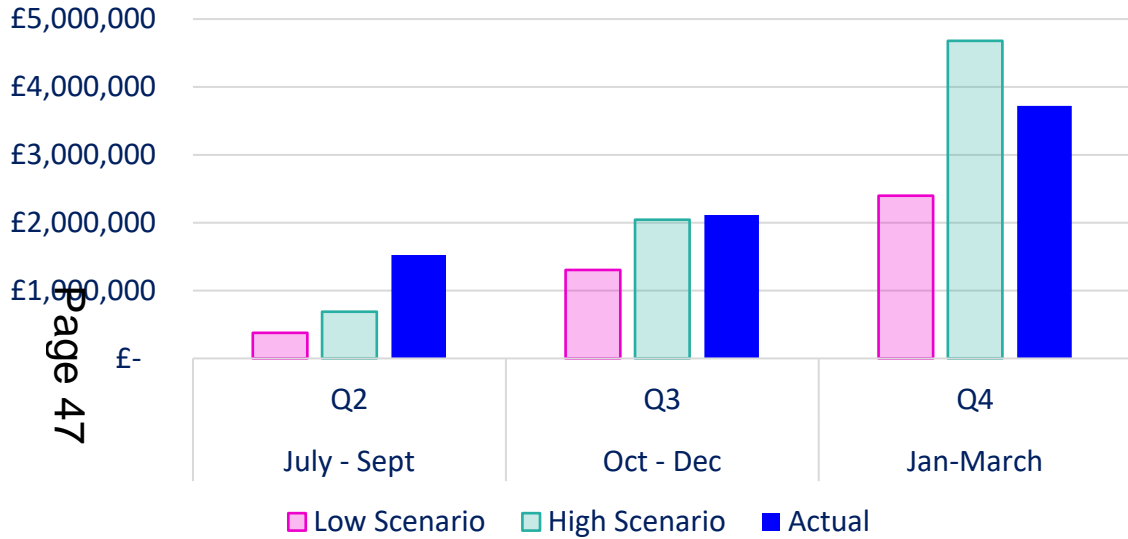
Quarterly intervention targets

Ambition scenarios vs actual savings



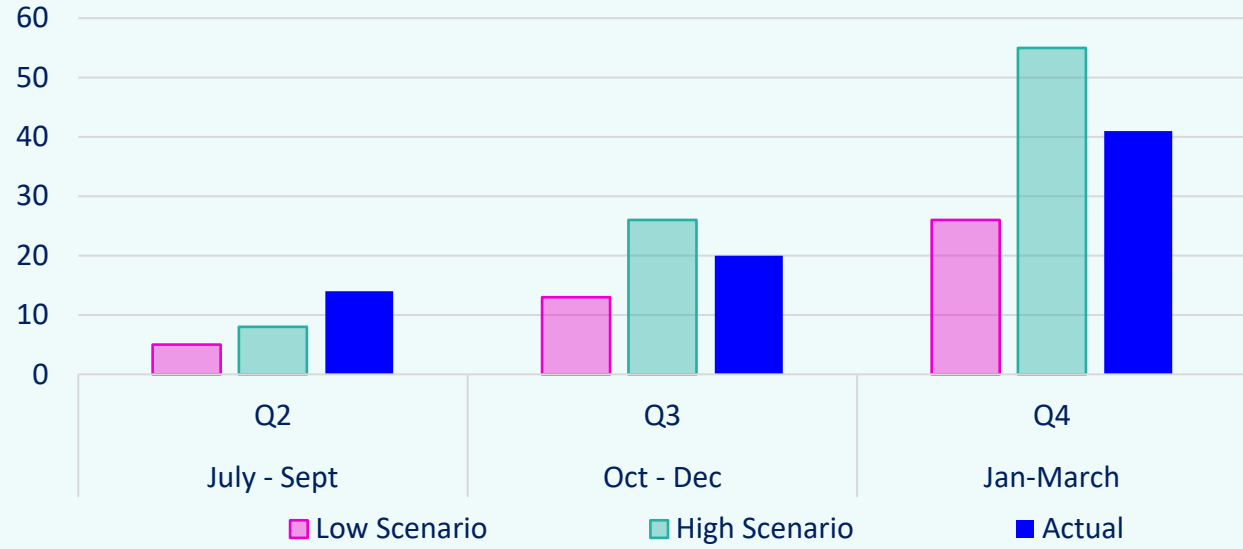
The interventions that have been delivered indicate that we have achieved our low scenario for Q4 savings and on track to achieve our high scenario by the end of March

Ambition scenarios vs actual savings

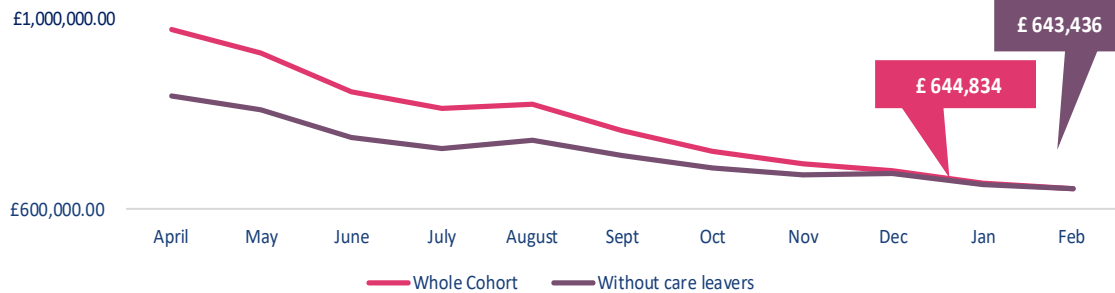


Page 47

Ambition scenarios vs actual interventions



Total weekly placement costs for C2S cohort



Average weekly costs for cohort

	April 23	Feb 24
Whole cohort	£4,335	£3,193
Without care leavers	£4,439	£3,782

41 interventions have been delivered, meaning we have achieved our low scenario for Q4 and on track to meet our high scenario by the end of March

Weekly cost of cohort decreasing in total and on average

Tyla is 17 and lives in supported accommodation

Her **Valuing Care** assessment evidenced that she has low needs in all areas, but needs the most support in building family relationships

Tyla's social worker discussed her needs and opportunities to support at our **multi-agency forum**

Multi-agency forum agreed that **reunification** will be explored, but that her current **package of care should be reviewed** to match her needs

Brokerage using valuing care evidence to support **strength-based** conversation with care provider

The package of care reduced to match needs, resulting in **weekly cost reduction of £300**

Continued support using **Family Network Meetings** to progress reunification

Jamie is 16 and has returned home, after living in an out of county residential home.

His **Valuing Care** assessment evidenced that with the right support his needs could be met by his father

Jamie had very low needs in most areas but needed significant support with forming **positive attachments** and being **safe in the community**

In early **October**, Jamie's social worker discussed his needs at our **multi-agency forum and a reunification support plan was put in place**

This included Family Network Meetings and support around exploitation and peer support

Jamie was able to **return home to Dad in December**. Support continued to ensure Jamie's needs are being met