

OPTION: UNIVERSAL AND TARGETED COMMISSIONING - PARENTING

BUDGET SAVING: £900,000

DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

The Council invests money with organisations in the community and voluntary sector to provide parenting, family support and advisory services including where families are affected by poverty and disadvantage.

The option in this area is to reduce these services and target them at those families most at risk of poor outcomes.

A 50% budget saving is proposed, £700,000 in 2013-14 and £200,000 in 2014-15. This would further reduce the preventative capacity within this field and statutory work, already dominant, would be the main focus. It would mean a reduction in the provision of parenting, family support and advisory services, and that these services would be targeted at families with the greatest need, where intervention will be most effective in reducing family breakdown and the need for specialist services.

The Council is also looking at working with other local authorities to jointly commission services, this has been piloted and will be reviewed.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

There is limited financial benchmarking data available to compare against other local authorities. However, locally benchmarking is done quarterly for comparison and contract monitoring. The commissioning intentions for 2013-14 have been developed using local data. The outputs and outcomes continue to show the difference these services are making, as consistently over 90% of participants have rated the services as successful in achieving outcomes.

Wider consultation has taken place with Children's Centres, Youth Offending Service and other commissioners. From consultation, and extensive ongoing dialogue, with parent/carers, young people and professionals issues have been raised such as parenting/family support and behaviour do indeed contribute most widely and greatly to needs escalating and subsequently a need for more intensive interventions and support. Furthermore, there has been expressed demand from statutory services for more early intervention/prevention services that provide and operate at the lower ends of the spectrum of need in more flexible ways, in particular delivery times. Some of the evidence of this is the cost of spot purchasing family support services procured through the contracts section to support the statutory family support services.

The rationale for the proposed savings seeks to reduce the investment made by the Council, whilst retaining a focus on delivering successful outcomes, early intervention and targeted services where most needed.

IMPACT

The impact of this budget saving would be to further reduce the preventative capacity within this field and statutory work, already dominant, would overshadow all work. It would mean a reduction in the provision of parenting and family support services, and focusing on a higher level of need with more targeted service provision.

A positive issue will be improved prioritisation for targeted and specialist services. The main risk is around changing the assumptions of service users and stakeholders about what has been available under the EIG family support service. As the commissioning moves to target families with a higher level of need existing services users may not meet the required threshold to access the higher level of targeted support. This will result in a reduction on the number of children, young people and their families receiving a service which in-turn could mean that there is an increase in referrals to Social Care, and an increase in the number of young people becoming first time entrants into the Youth Justice System.

The impact of reduced capacity would be distributed across the borough. Also, the proposed reduction would result in less money being invested within the voluntary sector and this could potentially affect our current providers of services. The impact of this may have a disproportionate effect on the individual organisations.

The proposed budget saving would impact on one member of staff.

MITIGATION

The Council would seek to ensure that services are accessible by continuing to target the more vulnerable and at risk children, young people and families such as young carers, black and minority ethnic families, children who have experienced domestic violence and those at the edge of care. Referrals to services will be managed centrally to ensure that appropriate families in need of support are accessing the interventions. Access to any service will be based on need.