

Draft Equalities Impact Assessment 2022/2023

Children's Services Savings Proposals

1. Placement sufficiency, continuation of improved processes for Semi-Independent Living through clear pathways and improved use of in borough provision - £0.341m

A. Care Leavers' Accommodation – Semi-independent Living procurement

The Care Leaver Accommodation project aim is to increase the supply of local semi-independent living accommodation for young people leaving care. The key objectives of the project are to reduce expenditure pressures within Children's Services, where placements for young people through framework or spot purchasing are significantly higher than locally commissioned provision, whilst simultaneously improving outcomes for young people through quality semi-independent living provision and closer links to family and community support networks.

It is believed that this proposal has a positive impact on groups that share protected characteristics for the following reasons:

- The strategy is to recommission, by way of a competitive procurement exercise, all semi-independent living (SIL) services for young people at risk of becoming homeless, at risk of entering the care system and care leavers across Hammersmith & Fulham. A tendering process will commence which will enable the Council to ensure it is receiving best value and competitive rates for this provision.
- This decision significantly contributes towards the Council's placement sufficiency program which will enable more of our vulnerable young people to be placed locally with greater access to family and local support networks including health and education services.
- The procurement will deliver efficiencies through increasing capacity of in borough placements and therefore reduce the need to place in higher cost out of borough spot purchase placements.
- The newly commissioned services will both improve the quality of services and offer a person-centered approach leading to positive outcomes for our children and young people.

B. Careplace maximisation

This proposal relates to improved use of the Commissioning Alliance dynamic purchasing procurement systems for residential, independent fostering agency and semi-independent living placements by searching and placing through the online Careplace system where greater competition and more competitive placement rates are offered.

It is believed that this proposal has a neutral impact on groups that share protected characteristics for the following reasons:

- The proposals relate to improved use of the Careplace Placement system which is hosted by Ealing Council on behalf of the Commissioning Alliance and its membership boroughs. The system offers a range of benefits over spot purchasing or framework placements. Each placement category listed on the Careplace system are part of a dynamic purchasing procurement system which allows providers to leave or join at any point throughout the system's lifetime. The placement categories are: independent fostering agencies, residential children's homes, special education needs and residential school placements.
- There is a wider selection of providers on these systems and more competitive rates. Improved use of this system will provide reassurance to wider department that providers being commissioned to look after our children have undergone a series of safeguarding and compliance checks. This will reduce the need to place with spot purchase and sometime unknown organisations.

2. Social, Emotional and Mental Health Review - joint funding arrangements with Health partners for Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) for Looked After Children (LAC) - £0.092m

This relates to a proposed contribution from the Health Service with respect to the provision of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services for Looked After Children.

It is believed that this proposal has a neutral impact on groups that share protected characteristics for the following reasons:

- There is no proposal to change the overall funding envelope for the service. The saving will be achieved by increasing the contribution paid by NHS organisations, while decreasing the relative portion paid for by the Local Authority.
- Overall, the service will not be negatively financially impacted, and there will not be any loss of delivery.

The service continues to have a positive impact on looked after children, and in particular those with mental health conditions.

3. Client and Placement Related Support - Improvement of processes to enable more effective and targeted interventions to support young people - £0.1m

Cost related to sections 17 and 23 support for children and families:

- Section 17 expenditure relates to supporting children and families to remain safely living together in the community. It includes support for subsistence, essential items, living costs, family support workers etc. to support children's

wellbeing, keep them safe and reduce escalation of need and likely entry into care.

- Section 23 expenditure relates to supporting children looked after. This includes transport to school and appointments, contact escorts, setting up home allowances, subsistence payments etc. Transport related cost constitute the biggest spend.

It is believed that this proposal has a positive impact on groups that share protected characteristics for the following outlined above and below:

- The proposals are in line with the business-as-usual functions of the department to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within the area who are in need; and to promote their upbringing by their families, by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children's needs.
- The proposals will ensure that the financial or cost related support given to children and families are purposeful and meet an identified need.

An assessment will determine the need for the support identified as essential to meet the needs of the child and/or prevent the child from suffering significant harm. The assessment will consider any protected characteristics of a child and/or family to ensure that they are not negatively affected, and an allocated worker will usually be involved with the family to ensure that the support is based on assessed need and its effectiveness is reviewed. It will also ensure that families make use of community provision e.g. food banks, free nursery places to meet that need where appropriate and will ensure support and guidance regarding benefits support and accessing work.

Children's Services Investment Proposals

4. Investment in Fostering and Adoption Services - £0.345m

- Shared Services Fostering Recharge – Investment following activity-based review within the Shared Service
- West London Regional Adoption – Investment following activity-based review within the agreement

It is believed that this proposal has a neutral impact on groups that share protected characteristics for the following reasons:

- In 2022/23 growth has been requested to manage activity and demand led pressures in front line service provision within the shared fostering and regional adoption services. This budget growth is to manage activity led workloads and not as a result of any proposed service change.
- Increased local provision will benefit young people in Hammersmith & Fulham to be placed in quality foster carers and more locally.

- With respect to adoption, this will enable us to recruit an increased and diverse pool of skilled adopters to meet the varied needs of children. This will also enable us to improve the quality and timeliness of permanence arrangements for young people.

5. Investment in Travel Care & Support - £0.169m

Budget growth is requested to reflect the increased demand of children and young people accessing travel assistance services.

Officers have assessed that the proposed budget growth will have a positive impact on protected groups, allowing the Council to respond to growing demands and meet its obligations under published travel care policies.