

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Executive
Date: 27th January 2020
Report for: Decision
Report of: The Executive Member for Children's Services

Report Title

Investing in Children

Summary

This report proposes that Trafford Council embarks on a three year programme of investment in Services for Children that focuses on early intervention and help to families that are at risk so as to ensure children are safeguarded at the earliest point and avoid the need to be taken into care.

Recommendation(s)

The Executive is asked to agree the investment outlined in the report and summarised in the Cost Benefit Analysis below.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

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Background Papers: None.

*For non-confidential reports to Executive add the following **mandatory** information:*

Relationship to Corporate Priorities	Ensuring a fair start for all children and young people.
Relationship to GM Policy or Strategy Framework	Safeguarding Children.
Financial	The investment in 2020/21 is £3.40m with an additional requirement of £0.61m in 2021/22 and a further £0.15m in 2022/23. A total of £4.16m. This has been offset by:- <ul style="list-style-type: none">• £3.2m benefit caused by a reduction in the

	<p>forecast demographic growth costs as a result of the early intervention and an additional £0.44m from other benefit forecast to be achieved,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £0.55m already allocated for improvement work within the MTFP and <p>Upon review by the Corporate Director of Finance and Systems a prudent view against the risk of benefit realisation has been taken and £2.25m over the 3 year period has been provided for in general contingency.</p> <p>Therefore the overall budget required over the 3 years is £2.22m and has been included in the Medium term financial plan.</p> <p>It should be noted that if the benefits are realised as forecast this will result in a saving to the revenue budget over time and so should be seen as an invest to save initiative.</p>
Legal Implications:	The Council has a statutory responsibility for securing the provision of services which address the needs of all children and young people in its area, including the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, and their families and carers. In doing so it should work closely with other local partners to improve the outcomes and well-being of children and young people.
Equality/Diversity Implications	There are no direct implications from this proposal.
Sustainability Implications	There are no sustainability implications from this proposal.
Resource Implications e.g. Staffing / ICT / Assets	There are implications for staffing and resources from this report which are covered in the investment section of the report.
Risk Management Implications	There are risks associated with this report which are covered in the 'Risks' section.
Health & Wellbeing Implications	None.
Health & Safety Implications	None.

1. INTRODUCTION

The last ten years has seen a reduction in funding for Early Help and Prevention Services for Children both nationally and locally, during which time there has been a significant increase in the number of children and young people requiring high level safeguarding and support. The removal or reduction of locally based early help and support services such as Sure Start, youth services and community based provision has meant that families have been unable to access the early help that would have identified and supported them and which may have avoided the need for children to be brought into the care system as their problems have escalated. This report proposes that Trafford Council embarks on a three year programme of investment in Services to Children that focuses on early intervention

and help to families that are at risk so as to ensure children are safeguarded at the earliest point and avoid the need to be taken into care.

This report sets out the background and potential investment required in Children's Services which will ensure that Children and Young People in Trafford receive the quality of support they deserve. The key elements included are a description of the local and national context, the demand pressures across the service and the resources needed over the next three years that will improve outcomes for the children and young people of Trafford.

1.1 Local Context

Trafford Council and its partners are wholly committed to ensuring that all our children have the best possible start in life. We are committed to working together to make sure that our children and young people are safe and able to reach their full potential. We wish to ensure that young people get the best start in life, are able to develop and reach their potential and that when they face issues they are able to access support and advice at the earliest stage so that they can remain with their families and continue to develop within their local communities.

However, over the last decade nationally and more so in Trafford in recent years, austerity has led to a focus of investment in reactive rather than preventative services which in turn has impacted on the Council's and our partner's ability to deliver the range, volume and quality of services to enable this commitment to be delivered. In Trafford since 2015, there has been disinvestment in Council-run Early Help and Prevention Services. At the same time, many of the community based agencies who can support families at the earliest stage of issues arising have faced financial pressures. Agencies such as schools now have fewer Teaching Assistants and pastoral staff and Health Visiting have found themselves under significant pressure. Below are key decisions resulting in savings / service reductions and changes that have been actioned in Trafford Council since 2015: –

2015/16

- Closure of Children's Centres (16 down to 2) - this removed significant preventative and early help support to families with young children. Parenting Classes, nursery provision and home based family support for young families starting to struggle was cut significantly.
- Removal of our own in house youth service and replacement with alternative provision (which has very recently come back in-house) and taking other services down to statutory services only – Connexions, Youth Offending and Education Welfare, all prevention and early help provision removed. Young people have often been unable to get early support with personal issues, risky behaviours etc.
- The above changes led to the disestablishment of over 100 sessional, part-time and full-time posts that helped children, young people and families at the early stages of experiencing difficulties.

2016/17

- Closure of Fairview Children's Home – reducing our internal provision from 3 children's homes to 2.
- Significant increase in the number of Looked After Children (LAC) in one year - LAC went up by 50 in year and Out of Borough (OOB) Placements increased from 9 to 20 in year.

2017/18

- Reduction/removal of services such as Multi-Systemic Therapy (evidenced based programme for young people in deep crisis still at home), Me2 Fostering (evidenced

based intensive fostering service) and reorganisation of the Outreach team for children who require additional support to a new Edge of Care Service to make savings (200k).

This context has contributed to a shift in demand over the last few years - families are presenting to children's social care with more entrenched issues than ever before. Families often present in crisis and on the verge of breakdown.

The focus of practice in Trafford and our resources have gradually shifted to delivering a model that offers very little to families when issues first emerge. The issues are left without effective intervention and may worsen. Eventually referrals are made to our First Response service (MARAT) but, as the issues have not reached the threshold for social care, they are turned down and a cycle of referral and re-referral emerges until the issues eventually have reached a level of concern at which point social care accept the case. At this point, the costs will have escalated significantly depending on the level of involvement.

Over the last few years, a significant proportion of our budget has been spent in supporting our over-populated Looked After System, particularly the cost of placements for adolescents. The cost of an out of borough placement can be up to £4,000 per week depending on the educational and security needs of the placement. There has been pressure on our Child in Need and Child Protection system and caseloads have been significantly escalating with the number of managers insufficient to maintain good oversight of those cases. The consequence of this is that cases at Child in Need and Child Protection level have drifted and often escalated. Rather than cases de-escalating, in fact they have often escalated into the Looked After System.

Like many Councils where cuts to early help services have been made, Trafford has become a reactive authority, waiting for families to hit crisis and then using significant resources to manage the crisis. This is an inefficient use of resources but more importantly, it is not good for children and their families.

It is apparent that the issues set out above were contributory factors in the findings of the Inspection by Ofsted under the ILACS (Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services) Framework of Trafford Children's Services in March 2019. The inspectors found significant areas where Trafford needs to improve in their findings which gave an overall judgement of Inadequate

We have fully accepted Ofsted's findings and are committed to a programme of rapid and sustainable improvement. In order to achieve this, we have already committed £1.5 million for 2019/20 to ensure the service is stable whilst driving up quality. This funding has been focused on stabilising and improving the social care system by bringing in additional staff at the frontline and at management level; upgrading the core Liquid Logic computer system; developing the audit framework and enhancing the Quality Assurance system. With this investment we have sought to have an accurate understanding of ourselves and to deliver a sustainable offer for children putting children and the quality of their experience at the centre of what we do.

Some good progress has been made in addressing some of the immediate issues we have faced but what is also apparent is that this immediate injection of resource will not deliver the quality, breadth and range of Services for Children required across the Borough to deliver on our commitment to ensuring that all our children have the best possible start in life.

It is clear that we should be working with our partners to offer help as early as possible and then offering a more intensive level of support for these early help families where needed to avoid them having to enter the social care system. Improving our services is not just about improving our Ofsted rating; it is about making sure children in Trafford benefit from the best services possible; making sure they are happy, safe and achieving their full potential. This report seeks to define the plans and resources required to meet this ambition in a sustainable way.

1.2 Current Demand and Pressures

Before considering proposals for a shift in the approach towards early help and the additional resources to support this, it is important to consider current demand and pressures in the system. Over the past 12 months in Trafford we have seen an increasing numbers of referrals per month and in the past few months we have seen a rise to over 300 a month which is unprecedented. That said, we fully expect that referral numbers will quickly reduce over the coming months as the new levels of need documents (referred to below) is distributed and used widely across the system. With regard to the main sources of referrals, Police account for 34%, Schools for 19% and Health 15%. These 3 are historically the main sources of referrals, and this mirrors the data in comparator groups, with similar proportions across the country.

The numbers of children being looked after in Trafford has also been on the increase and by autumn 2019 we had 410 Young people in our care. Social worker caseloads are also key to a good service for children. Evidence from across the country says that manageable caseloads should be below 20 and Trafford's have been higher than this for some time due to increasing demand and referrals in the system. Since the Focussed visit by Ofsted in July 2018, and the ILACS Inspection in March 2019, we have made some progress in reducing average caseload but there is more to do if we are to achieve our aspiration of fully manageable caseloads of 18 per social worker.

Furthermore, the reductions achieved in caseloads to date in some teams, is often as a result of recruiting agency workers which takes the teams over establishment and without this resource it would not be sustainable. The ongoing cost of agency staff within our service is predicted to be approx. £800,000 in 2019/20. A single social worker is £874 per week and agency social worker is £1,088.

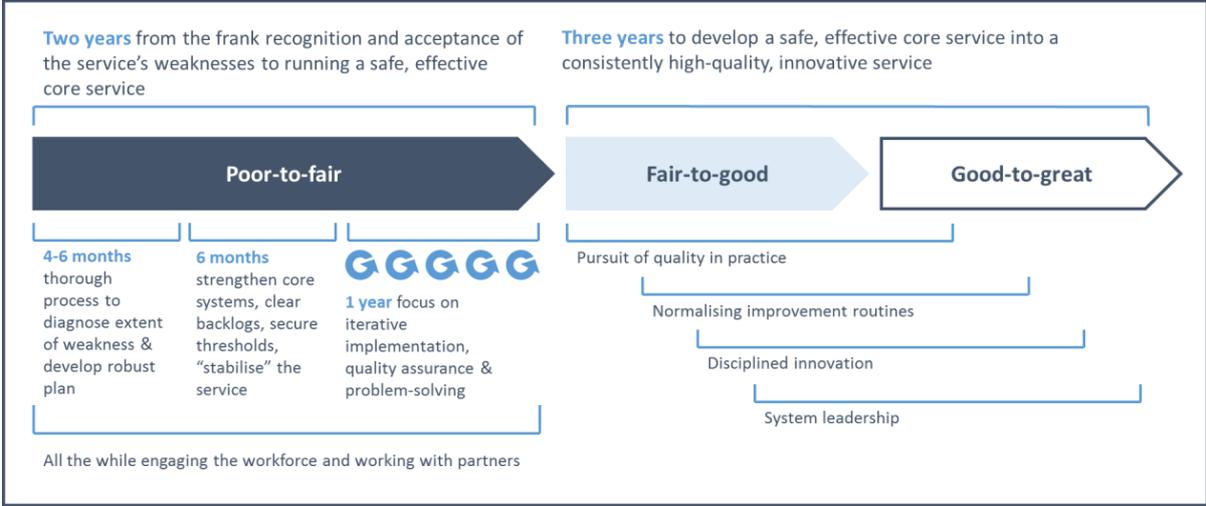
In order to manage demand within Children's Social Care since 2018, the Council has been undertaking a large scale programme of transformation including the creation of Family Focus to support children and families on the edge of care but by necessity these initiatives have focussed on managing cases already in the system. Work since the Ofsted ILACS inspection utilising the £1.5m resources earmarked for Children's Social Care post-inspection has begun to focus on re-aligning services and reducing the need for entry into social care and specifically entry into care. This has involved a significant audit exercise and remedial work undertaken on a number of cases. However it has not addressed sufficiently the entry into care rise and a growing complexity in need. The rates continue to rise and have remained high.

It is worth considering the national context to help inform the approach we need to take with our partners to bring about a step change in the way we deliver our Services for Children.

1.3 National Context

In 2016 the Local Government Association (LGA) commissioned an action research programme of work into the improvement of children's services at all levels. The key

findings of that report showed that an improvement journey is in distinct phases in a sequential manner moving from *poor*, to *fair*, to *good* and eventually to *great*. The timeline below shows this in more detail.



For local areas seeking to improve from poor to fair, they found that there were two distinctive emphases. The first was on putting core systems and processes in place, reasserting control over the system, accurately assessing risk, making sure cases were allocated, clearing backlogs and bringing caseloads down to manageable levels through recruitment and redistribution. The second, however, was on rebuilding the culture and ethos of the organisation so as to support ongoing and sustained improvement. The pitfalls to be avoided during this phase are failing to get to a genuine understanding of why the service has been failing and its current weaknesses and strengths – “getting to a baseline” – and rushing into an ill-thought-out restructure. The premium here is on accurate diagnosis and in-depth engagement with the workforce.

For local areas seeking to move from fair to good, they found that sustaining improvement required that they see improvement as a long-term process underpinned by a long-term strategy. Complacency and short-termism are the risks to be avoided. There are three distinctive features during this phase. First, local areas have sought to develop their capacity for robust *self*-assessment. Second, the focus of leadership of improvement shifts, with middle managers playing a more significant role in embedding improvements and ensuring greater consistency of frontline practice. Third, the focus of improvement activities moves from certain “mission-critical” aspects of the service (such as the front door) to see children’s services as a single interdependent system, with greater emphasis placed on preventative and early help services.

They also found that there were three further distinctive characteristics of the activities of local areas seeking to sustain excellence. First, they found that improvement had ceased to be a discrete project and was part of “core business”. Second, routines to ensure oversight of key services were embedded to the extent that they could embrace disciplined innovation to drive ongoing improvement. Third, senior leaders of good-to-great children’s services may have opportunities to act as system leaders, supporting other local areas. A complete cultural shift is required.

Other local authorities have used this programme to good effect to drive their improvement programmes for services for children leading to better outcomes for children and young people. They have shifted the way they use resources towards early help and taken a more graduated approach further along the spectrum. Intervention at the early help stage has led to less involvement and cost at child in need, child protection and particularly

children in care. Families have been supported at the appropriate level and have a lower level of intrusion.

This is an evidenced based approach to providing good services to families. A local example is Stockport where DfE Innovation funding was used to create Stockport Family. Stockport Family transformed the culture and ways of working within children’s services in Stockport, improving outcomes for children and families, and reducing the number of family breakdowns. An independent evaluation concluded that Stockport Family was designed to reduce the costs of children’s services in Stockport. Data from the evaluation shows they were forecast to achieve a reduction of just over £1.2 million in the cost of LAC in 2016/2017 compared with actual spend in 2013/14. This amounts to a 14% reduction.

There are a number of other local authority examples which reinforce the belief that the LGA approach set out in summary here is one which the Council should take in order to inform the development of our new approach for Services for Children. The remainder of the report sets out initially some of the work underway to provide the framework for our new model and then a proposal for a new Trafford approach to the delivery of Services for Children and Young People in the borough to ensure they have the very best start in life and that they continue to thrive as they grow and develop.

2. THE FRAMEWORK – LEVELS OF NEED

The Trafford Safeguarding Partnership recently published its framework for determining the levels of need for children, young people and families. This information is to help professionals assess and understand the needs of a family who may require additional support in order to thrive.

The majority of families will never go beyond Universal Services. Others will only dip into additional services while others will need varying levels of support throughout their lives.

The levels of need are designed to support professionals when making decisions about what level of support a family needs and what tools and other agencies are available to support this work. Local partners have worked closely on the development of the Levels of Need document and are continuing to co-produce the framework for early help that will ensure community based support and advice is available at levels 2 and 3.

Level		Description: At this level the child or family...	What Needs to happen next?	Assessment Required Referral Process
Universal	Level 1	...is thriving without requirement for additional support and all needs are being met by universal services, for example Health Visitor, School Nurse, Dentist or School.	Ensure that all families are aware of the Family Information Service and are registered with Education and Training providers, Health Services and Community Groups.	Use of Trafford Directory
Early Help / Prevention	Level 2	...may require or would benefit from additional input or support from single agency.	When a child begins to display emerging needs requiring additional support, services already working with the child should support the family by undertaking an assessment and develop an Outcome Plan. This will identify support from within the local community or a specific intervention.	Assessment required for example Early Help Assessment. Referral Form for specific agency

Intensive Family Support	Level 3	...are experiencing multiple and/or complex needs. The family is struggling to effect change without the support and intervention of services. There is a need for a greater level of support including regular home visits.	If a child or family's issues are more complex and cannot be managed within the community and the family consent, additional support can be sourced through Intensive Family Support. This would include support in the home, pulling in multi-agency partners who are, or need to be, involved with the child and family in order to achieve a positive outcome	Early Help Assessment; which will be required when referring for Intensive Family Support.
Child In Need	Level 4	...is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision of services. The child's health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired without the provision of additional services; or the child is disabled.	As the child and family's issues continue to escalate or if interventions are not working and it is felt that the needs cannot be met without the intervention of social care. There should be a sound record of interventions and support offered previously by services to highlight why social intervention is required.	Child and Family Assessment. Referring agency to complete referral.
Child Protection	Level 5	...is at risk of or suffering significant harm and is in need of help and protection. Has a high level of unmet and complex needs requiring statutory interventions.	These children require immediate social care intervention to ensure continued safety and positive development and to prevent significant harm. This may lead to them becoming subject to a Multi-Agency Child Protection (CP) Plan or becoming Looked After. Any child subject to a CP Plan or Looked After will have social care intervention already in place.	Child and Family Assessment. Referring agency to complete referral.

3. PROPOSAL – A NEW APPROACH

Given the local and national context described above and the clear need for families to receive advice, help and support at the earliest stage, partners across Trafford have worked to develop the levels of need framework and the models of service that would ensure parents and children with need are identified earlier, provided with locally based support where appropriate and have access to qualified and permanent social care staff with manageable caseloads who can support them through the social care system should that level of support be required. The proposal for an innovative 'Invest to Save' approach and working closely with key partners across Trafford to co-produce our early help model will deliver the step change in culture and delivery of service that is required over the next three years.

Using a restorative practice model and having more early help and intensive family support, better management of our cases at Child in Need and Child Protection and targeted support for children with complex safeguarding or who are on the edge of care will reduce high cost demand at Looked After level. Focussing on developing more family based care such as fostering and having resources for safe and effective discharges will gradually reduce our need for the number of placements. This shift in culture and delivery will require the full support of our partners and a significant initial investment. In Trafford, we are seeking an injection of resource to assist in making the shift necessary to modernise our delivery and achieve efficiencies. This is a mixture of temporary and permanent resources and is supported by a detailed cost benefit analysis, a summary of which is set out in this report. This proposal has used the levels of need to describe the investment and benefits of the new models of work for children's services and also includes the First Response Team and looked after care services.

It is proposed that a substantial investment is made in each of the 'Levels of Need' above as well as in staffing of social work teams, Business Support, HR and performance and quality assurance teams so as to achieve average caseloads of 18 and have the capacity to develop high quality performance data on which to base management decisions. The investment would also ensure that families (and partner organisations, particularly schools) are receiving support and advice at the earliest stage. In addition the investment proposes an update to existing IT systems to support the proposed changes and to ensure that senior managers, the Executive Member and other key stakeholders receive quality, timely and correct information on the support children and young people receive.

In 2019/20, as already outlined, the council provided £1.5m to support the initial response to the Ofsted Report of May 2019 and these funds were used to address the immediate issues identified by the report. During 2019, further review and analysis has been undertaken to identify how we can ensure that the progress that has been made to date can be both sustained and enhanced. The aim of these proposals is ensure that the needs of children are central to our services and that their voice is heard throughout the care process. We will help develop community based advice and support for families to access at the earliest stage and work with partners to provide positive outcomes for all children and young people. The intention throughout is that we work as a system with our partners and co-design our early help offer with teams, partners, families and children.

The Cost Benefit Analysis is summarised at Appendix A and two examples of benefits that are expected from the proposed investment are set out below. This is a major opportunity to invest in the services provided to Children and Young People across Trafford and one significant benefit forecasted from the above approach would be a reduction of 36 children in the care system (which would include high cost and Out of Borough Placements) by 2022/23.

Example A - Level 3 – Intensive Family Support

Model Description

Data from the First Response team is showing that there has been an increase in the number of families presenting who have multiple needs, living in chaotic lifestyles and historically have not accessed services – however a significant proportion of these families are under the statutory/safeguarding thresholds but require intensive interventions.

Since July, the Intensive Family Support Team (IFS) have been using the levels of need document to understand the strengths and needs of families to ensure they receive the right support at the right time. This has allowed IFS to understand and record the decision/outcome from initial safeguarding referrals when the family did meet a safeguarding threshold.

Since the 1st Oct the council has introduced a new process to the front door. First Response previously acted as a 'gatekeeper' for children's social care – referrals were assessed on whether they reached the threshold for statutory intervention and if not they were returned to the referrers. This meant that community agencies were expected to support children and families that met both level 2 and level 3. Community agencies often struggled to co-ordinate a response to the more complex families. This frequently led to re-referral after the situation became more concerning. This accounts for our high level of re-referral, sometimes over 30% which is one of the highest levels in the country.

In order to deliver the Levels of Need approach effectively and ensure families with higher levels of support get the interventions they need quickly to prevent escalation the First Response team are now able to screen for level 3 support as well as level 4 & 5 intervention. The new triage process as referrals come in send the referral down one of 2 pathways – level 4&5 and now also level 3. If a case is viewed as a level 3 the work will now be sent to the Intensive Family Support Team for an intervention.

The current Intensive Family Support (IFS) team consists of 2.5 FTE workers (stronger families funded) and 2 FTE seconded workers until March 2020 who manage a workload of 63 families. This caseload of around 11.5 per worker is above average and research from other authorities indicates that it should normally be between 8/10. This means that there is currently no capacity to take on more cases and it affects the number of times a worker can visit a family. In addition, the number of new cases being referred to the team is more than the cases being stepped down or up each month so demand is increasing month on month. From an Intervention approach families are more likely to engage at this threshold as a strength based approach is implemented giving confidence to the child, young person and family.

To support the cultural shift we are proposing to make to intervene at the earliest stage and avoid escalation/support de-escalation we need to see a stronger offer at Level 2 and a resourced offer at level 3 that has an effective model of brief intervention. The stronger the offer and the ability to allocate and intervene quickly at level 3 the fewer cases we will see escalate into social care.

To develop a full service we would propose to have an incremental growth in this area of Intensive Family Support (IFS) workers and team leaders which will give the opportunity to evaluate impact. Thirty IFS workers would enable 240 families to access a maximum intensive 6 month intervention or 480 per year managed at a level 3. The outcome for families would be to step down to universal services.

Example B - SHINE (Complex Safeguarding)

Model Description

The Shine service was established in 2018-19 through the Achieving Change Together (ACT) project. The shine service was initiated as exploitation was identified as a key and ongoing challenge for Children's Services. This is noted especially for young people at the higher end of interventions from the authority, those on the edge of care and those looked after. These issues can often be significant factors that escalate a case to a Care Order, or cause placement breakdown and escalation within care, thus increasing placement instability and increasing costs. Exploitation has significant and ongoing negative consequences for young people, in terms of mental health, dependency and attachment, the impact on their education, and the further consequences for their future life chances, particularly with criminal behaviour in adulthood. Shine is an intensive additional support for some of the most complex cases in Children's Social Care who work with the very children who would likely end up being accommodated in expensive and specialist Out of Borough (OOB) Residential placement at around £5,000 to £6,000 per week. Supporting them in the community fits with our vision that all children belong in families. It aligns to the work we are also doing with the No Wrong Door Project.

The model involves a personalised, flexible, and intensive way of working with young people currently experiencing, or at risk of, Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE). This means workers have a caseload equivalent to 5-6 per

worker, which ensures young people are offered an intensive key worker to build a relationship with.

This Shine project began in October 2018 with funding as set out below:-

- a Service manager - this is provided from the South Area Team and therefore fully funded.
- 2 fte Complex Safeguarding Social Workers recruited in January and a 0.5 fte Senior Practitioner in February funded from a 12 month successful bid to the DfE supported by GMCA.
- a 0.5fte Complex Safeguarding Social Worker embedded within Greater Manchester Police (GMP) Trafford as part of the Project Phoenix Team, which focuses on CSE. This is funded from the frontline grant which is expected to continue beyond March 2020
- a fte adults Social Worker co-located with the Shine to team to support those young people transitioning to adulthood. This post is funded by Adults Social Care
- a fte parent link worker provided from Family Focus which has led to a shortage of capacity in Family Focus and cannot be sustained as they are currently operating a 9 family waiting list for crisis support.

This team is integrated with GMP Trafford within their new Anti-Exploitation Unit, leading on anti-exploitation and safeguarding at the highest levels in the Borough.

This team now requires a 'fit for purpose' and resourced model to manage complex young people who are very vulnerable and to meet the increasing demand.

The investment recommended would be for those posts whose funding ceases on the 31st March and for additional posts to support/strengthen the team in 2021/22 to ensure high quality support for the expanding number of young people on the 'Edge of Care'.

Benefits

Creating the stable SHINE team will allow the service to continue to support more young people with complex safeguarding issues.

The Shine team has been operational for just over 7 months, and in this time there have been 16 active cases, with 1 since closed. As part of the holistic approach of the team, the Parent Link Workers are working with 5 families to support children to remain living with their parents and to improve parental understanding of complex safeguarding concerns. The initial outcomes of this have been positive, with costs avoided for one child in particular who has remained at home with his father rather than entering residential care.

In addition the team have offered advice and guidance on complex safeguarding issues to social workers of cases not open to the Shine team. This has included professional thinking time for a further 8 children where the cases would have been accepted if the team had had the capacity, and attending a number of strategy meetings to offer support and advice regarding Complex Safeguarding.

The examples above give an indication of the benefits of the level of investment being sought and the tables below and appended summarise the investment required over the next three years aligned to the different levels of need.

	Costs			Total £
	2020/21 £	2021/22 £	2022/23 £	
Investment	3,399,696	607,521	152,504	4,159,721
Amount From Benefits	49,636	(129,388)	(358,048)	(437,800)
Less Council Funding already in MTFP and not committed	(550,000)			(550,000)
Less benefits from demographic growth savings	(1,200,000)	(1,000,000)	(1,000,000)	(3,200,000)
Increase to general contingency	750,000	750,000	750,000	2,250,000
Council Funding Required	2,449,332	228,133	(455,544)	2,221,921

The investment in 2020/21 is £3.40m with an additional requirement of £0.61m in 2021/22 and a further £0.15m in 2022/23. This is offset by a reduction in the forecast demographic growth costs of £3.2m and also an additional £0.44m from other benefits forecast to be achieved as a result of reducing the number of placements (particularly high cost and Out of Borough) and funding already in the MTFP of £0.55m.

This has been reviewed by the Corporate Director of Finance and Systems and a prudent view against the risk of benefit realisation has been taken and £2.25m has provided for in general contingency.

Therefore the overall budget required over the 3 years is £2.22m and this has been included in the Medium Term Financial Plan.

It should be noted that if the benefits are realised as forecast this will result in a saving to the revenue budget over time and so should be seen as an invest to save initiative.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to achieve the step change in culture and deliver a system focused on early identification of need and appropriate intervention/support at the earliest point it is recommended that the investment outlined in the 'Case for Change ' and the summary Cost Benefit Analysis is included in the budget plans for 2020/21 and for the following two years

5. RISKS

Given the outcomes of the Ofsted inspection and the evidence in the LGA findings (section 1) there is a real risk that without the stabilisation of staffing at the various levels of need and the investment in early intervention/support there will be continued growth in families presenting at level 4 (children in need) or requiring significant social care involvement/safeguarding (level 5).

To support the culture shift and development of a robust set of procedures/systems there is a need for a range of 'enablers' to be included in this report. Without the additional support in areas such as business support, data management and HR the appointment, training and development of staff will be put at risk. In the same way, without robust data collection and analysis the rigorous use of data to spot trends, monitor progress and develop services could be undermined

The Children's Commissioner for England and the LGA have highlighted the impact of poverty on growing pressure on children's social care budgets. Both the commissioner and the LGA emphasise the need to invest resource in early support/intervention to both deliver the help that children and families need and to prevent the growth in the number of children coming into the care system.

Reasons for the Recommendations

The investment proposed will enable the Council to achieve the step change in culture and deliver a system focused on early identification of need and appropriate intervention/support at the earliest point to ensure that we are able to deliver the help that children and families need and to prevent the growth in the number of children coming into the care system.

Other options

Given the findings of the Ofsted review, doing nothing is not an option and changes have already been made and funded as an immediate response to the needs identified in the Ofsted report. The option proposed is supported by a full cost benefit analysis

Financial Implications are contained in the body of the report.

Key Decision - Yes

If Key Decision, has 28-day notice been given? - Yes

		Costs			
Workstream	Activity	2020/21 £	2021/22 £	2022/23 £	Total £
Level 1 (universal)		0	0	0	0
Level 2 (early help/prevention)	Direct support and advice to community agencies (eg Schools) working with families at Level 2 (Early Help in the community). Providing mechanisms of support such as Early Help Panels and other models to support Level 2 agencies develop and deliver effective services at Level 2.	153,069	156,131	159,252	468,452
Level 3 (Intensive Family Support)	The creation of a dedicated Intensive Family Support Service to work with children and families who have level 3 needs. This is where the support of the community agencies at Level 2 is no longer enough and short-term targeted support is also offered through an intensive family support model by trained family support workers. The intention is to 'catch families before they fall' and get them to the point where they only require support from universal provision or at level 2.	640,198	1,157,205	1,628,582	3,425,985
Level 4 (Children in Need)	Strengthening our offer for families who have been assessed as needing a statutory service under Section 17 of the Children Act. Ensuring social worker caseloads are maintained at a level where effective practice can be delivered and other evidence based approaches and models can be utilised. Offering support through our Area Family Support Teams with additional resources to offer specialist interventions where needed. This is where the intensive support would begin where there are issues such as child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, domestic abuse etc.	749,431	859,247	598,344	2,207,022

Level 5 (Child Protection)	Ensuring there is the right level of resource to ensure effective social work with children and families where there is risk of significant harm. Giving social workers the right caseload levels, training and management support to deliver the most effective practice at this level. Access to specialist interventions and services would also be utilised at this level. The proposal will also enhance our service for children in care; ensuring safe caseloads, more support to Foster Carers etc.	440,837	473,361	434,464	1,348,662
First Response	The Front Door for children has been significantly re-designed and needs to be fully resourced to deliver the new model. The new approach has an increased resource at the first points of contact to ensure quick and effective decision making. It will ensure that if a statutory response is required this will happen quickly and where this is not needed we will utilise the new Level 3 Intensive Family Support Service. The new Front Door will offer guidance and support to agencies who refer in children at Level 2. There will also be an enhanced Assessment Function at the Front Door to ensure that assessments are done in a timely way to a quality standard that means children are supported at the right level at the right time.	834,789	851,485	868,508	2,554,782
Quality Assurance and Improvement	There will be an increased resource to support our children in care and improved chairing of child protection conferences. We will also further develop our ability to hear the Voice of the Child. We have created a significantly improved Quality Assurance approach with additional resources so we know ourselves better, measure the quality and impact of what we are doing and take action when we see that aspects of our work could be improved,	282,123	247,845	212,080	742,048
Enablers	All of the increased activity above leads to a requirement for more support from other	299,249	261,943	258,491	819,683

	parts of the Council's system such as the HR functions, Data and Performance Teams etc. Without this support it would not be possible to change and extend existing models and services.				
Grand Total		3,399,696	4,007,217	4,159,721	11,566,634
Year on Year Investment		3,399,696	607,521	152,504	4,159,721
Amount From Benefits		49,636	(129,388)	(358,048)	(437,800)
Less Council Funding already in MTFP and not committed		(550,000)			(550,000)
Less benefit of reduced Demographic Growth Funding required		(1,200,000)	(1,000,000)	(1,000,000)	(3,200,000)
Increase to general contingency		750,000	750,000	750,000	2,250,000
Council Funding Required		2,449,332	228,133	(455,544)	2,221,921

Finance Officer Clearance (type in initials).....**NB**.....

Legal Officer Clearance (type in initials)...**JLF**.....

[CORPORATE] DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE (electronic)...Sara Todd

To confirm that the Financial and Legal Implications have been considered and the Corporate Director has cleared the report prior to issuing to the Executive Member for decision.