Children's Transformation Programme

November 2023

Somerset Council

23/24 Budget Monitoring Report

General Fund

£212m gross expenditure budget

£ 89m income budget

£123m net budget

£11.8m forecast overspend (9.6%)

| Service Area	Current Budget	Full Year Projection	Month 5 Variance	A/(F)	Movement From Month 4	Direction From Month 4
Children's Social Care						
Prevention	5.7	5.7	0.0	-	0.0	➡
Fostering & Permanence	13.3	13.3	0.0	-	0.0	➡
External Placements	38.4	48.5	10.1	A	1.3	⬇
Fieldwork	13.9	13.9	0.0	-	0.0	➡
Disabilities	2.5	2.5	0.0	-	0.0	➡
Partnership, Audit & Quality	4.3	4.3	0.0	-	0.0	➡
Children Looked After	2.3	2.3	0.0	-	0.0	➡
Leaving Care	(0.8)	(0.8)	0.0	-	0.0	➡
Central	2.2	2.2	0.0	-	0.0	➡
Residential Homes	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	0.0	➡
sub total	**81.8**	**91.9**	**10.1**	**A**	**1.3**	⬇
Commissioning						
Commissioning Services	11.1	11.1	0.0	-	0.0	➡
Supporting Families	(0.6)	(0.6)	0.0	-	0.0	➡
Central	0.7	0.7	0.0	-	0.0	➡
sub total	**11.2**	**11.2**	**0.0**	**-**	**0.0**	➡
Education Partnerships and Skills						
Education Partnerships and Skills	1.2	1.2	0.0	-	0.0	➡
Home to School Transport	12.9	12.9	0.0	-	0.0	➡
sub total	**14.1**	**14.1**	**0.0**	**-**	**0.0**	➡
Inclusion						
Inclusion Services	5.7	5.7	0.0	-	0.0	➡
SEND Transport	10.2	11.9	1.7	A	1.7	⬇
sub total	**15.9**	**17.6**	**1.7**	**A**	**1.7**	⬇
Children & Family Services Total	**123.0**	**134.8**	**11.8**	**A**	**3.0**	⬇

Key Pressures

## External Placements Pressures £10.1m overspend

- Unregistered placements £4.2m – although numbers are reducing, almost three quarters of the annual 2,190 budgeted placement days have been provided in the first 5 months of the financial year

- Residential placements £4.2m – increase in placements due to complexity of children, moves from unregistered placements and lack of sufficiency within fostering both internally and in the external market
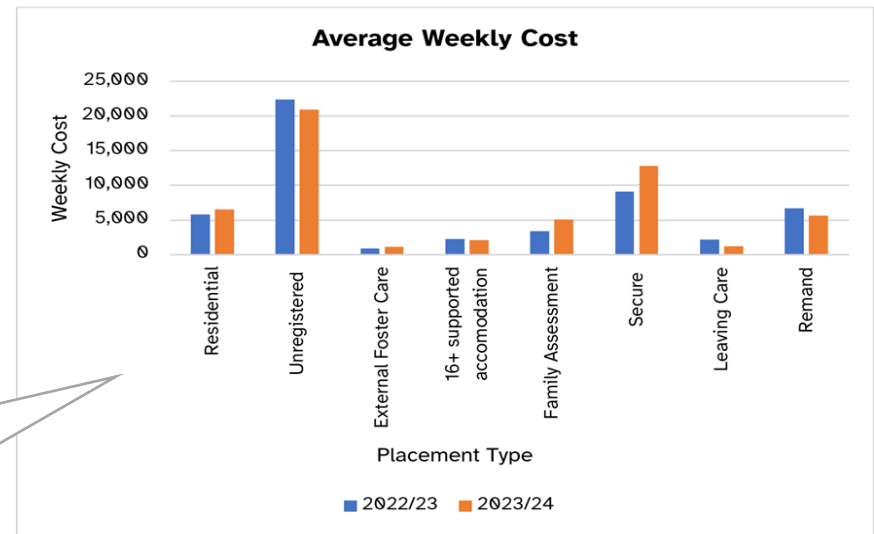
2023/24 Key Cost Drivers

Almost three quarters of budgeted unregistered placements days have been provided in first 5 months

CLA Data since January 2022

590
580
570
560
550

Apr 22　Jul 22　Oct 22　Jan 23　Apr 23
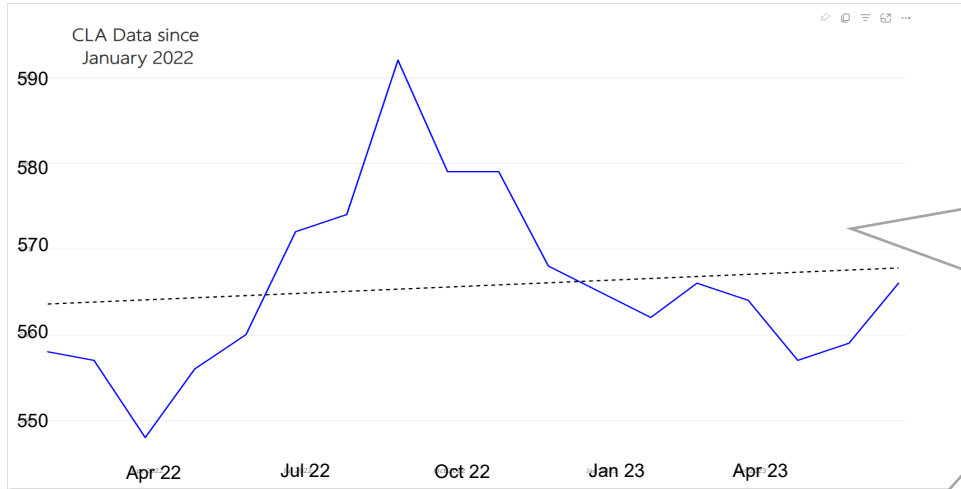
- Relatively stable no. of CLA since Jan 2022
- Unexpected spike in summer 2022 – CYP with complex needs
- Impact on no. of external placements and high cost of placement

Provision of Unregistered Placement Days

31%

69%

- Actual days used 31/08/23
- Remaining bed days for 2023/24
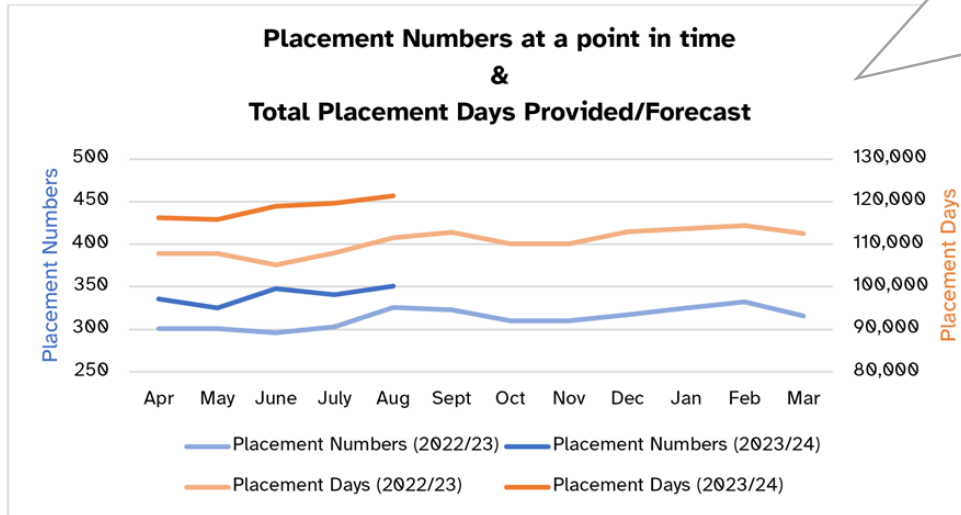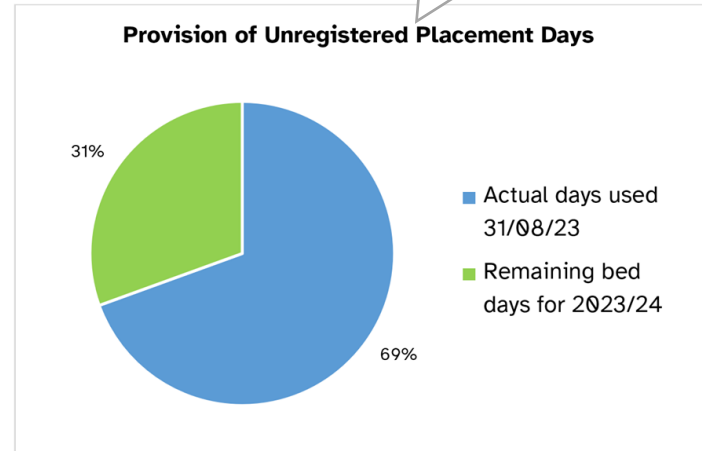
Increases in placements numbers and placement days…
- UASC – National Transfer Scheme
- Residential placements – complexity of need and lack of sufficiency in fostering sector
- Bespoke 16+ supported accomodation – complexity of need

Reduction in external fostering placements

Placement Numbers at a point in time & Total Placement Days Provided/Forecast

Placement Numbers
500
450
400
350
300
250

Placement Days
130,000
120,000
110,000
100,000
90,000
80,000

Apr　May　June　July　Aug　Sept　Oct　Nov　Dec　Jan　Feb　Mar

— Placement Numbers (2022/23)　— Placement Numbers (2023/24)
— Placement Days (2022/23)　— Placement Days (2023/24)

Average Weekly Cost

25,000
20,000
15,000
10,000
5,000
0

Residential　Unregistered　External Foster Care　16+ supported accomodation　Family Assessment　Secure　Leaving Care　Remand

Placement Type

■ 2022/23　■ 2023/24

- Average weekly cost of unregistered placements is now £21k (6% reduction)
- Increase of 10% on average cost of residential placements

Key Pressures

Home to School SEND Transport £1.7m

- Demand for SEND Transport has doubled since 2018 - significant factor is the rise in number of children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) attending a school other than their local mainstream setting
- Passenger costs increasing by 10%
- Increasing cost of contracted supply –
  - average annual cost of providing transport for SEN children has risen from £6,468 in 2018 to £7,109 in 2023 (10%)
  - average annual cost of providing transport for mainstream children has risen from £968 in 2018 to £1,498 (54%)

	Demand Number of Passengers		Costs £m		Cost per passenger £/annum	
	SEN	Mainstream	SEN	Mainstream	SEN	Mainstream
Mar-23	1,252	8,212	8.9	12.3	7,109	1,498
Mar-22	1,112	7,825	7.0	9.9	6,316	1,269
Mar-21	885	8,003	5.4	9.7	6,052	1,217
Mar-20	857	8,074	5.3	9.4	6,209	1,168
Mar-19	758	8,347	4.6	9.8	6,073	1,175
Mar-18	674	8,400	4.4	8.1	6,468	968

23/24 Budget Monitoring Report

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)
£15.6m forecast in year deficit; cumulative £37.5m deficit

DSG Block	Total funding available for services 2023/24	2023/24 Forecast Month 5	Forecast in-year variance surplus/(deficit)
	£m	£m	£m
Schools	2.5	2.8	(0.3)
Central Schools	5.0	5.0	-
Early Years	31.1	31.1	-
High Needs	74.2	89.5	(15.3)
Total	**112.8**	**128.4**	**(15.6)**

Key Pressures

DSG Key Pressures

High Needs Block
- Planned budget pressure £5.5m – year on year growth of EHCPs and lack of sufficiency
- Independent & Non-Maintained Schools (INMS) £5.1m deficit – increases in placements and insufficient maintained specialist provision for pupils with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs
- Mainstream Schools & Academies £1.5m - increases in the number, complexity, and cost of new and extended EHCPs and related costed packages
- Children Looked After (CLA) £0.9m deficit – increased complexity and cost of CLA placements, resulting in an increased contribution from High Needs

Schools Block
- The £0.3m deficit is unplanned expenditure for places for asylum seeking children

Our Transformation Priorities

In a time of financial constraints, for individuals, families and the organisations that support our communities, we must focus on what has the greatest impact on children and families' lives.

Our statutory duties remain at the core of our work in a 'business as usual' approach. Our priorities reflect the work we must do to transform the way we deliver our services in 3 key areas:

- **Sufficiency** – ensuring that we have enough resources to predict demand and to manage the needs of our most vulnerable children within the available budget

- **Efficiency** – making the best use of the resources we have, ensuring focus on agreed priorities and providing value for money

- **Managing Risk** – taking decisive and timely action to prevent crisis for children and/or deterioration in the services children need

Children's Services Transformation Priorities 2023-2026

Sufficiency

Efficiency

Manage risk

Education for Life

1. **Best Start in Life** – quality pre-school places for 0-5 years
2. **Whole school focus** – raise attainment for all pupils
3. **Increase attendance & reduce exclusions** – identify children at risk and build effective Team around the School model
4. **School places** – reduce pressures in Bridgwater and Taunton
5. **School transport** – support children to attend their local school and improve value for money

- Improved early years access & engagement
- Improved school attendance
- Improved take up of post 16 education and training
- Reduced exclusions
- Improved attainment
- Improved staff recruitment & retention
- Improved school transport value for money
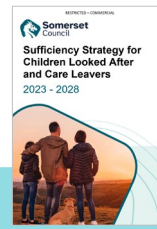
CLA Transformation

1. **Homes & Horizons** – 8 to 10 homes, pods and annexes
2. **Fostering improvement** – recruitment, retention and support for Foster Carers
3. **Re-commissioning 16+** – support for independence for young people at risk of homelessness
4. **Edge of care support**
5. **Intelligence and control** – better data to plan & manage
6. **Shape and manage the market** – increase sufficiency
7. **Regional commissioning**

- More local foster carers for Somerset children looked after (CLA)
- More children in residential care live in Somerset
- Better value for money through good quality local provision
- Fewer children coming into care

SEND Strategy

1. **Working together** to help children achieve what matters to them
2. **Getting help as early as possible** so that families can access the right support at the right time
3. **Access the right information, support and provision**
4. **Preparing for the future** – gaining the right skills to achieve ambitions and prepare for adulthood

- Enhanced learning provisions enable mainstream schools to offer more inclusive provision
- Providing more specialist places for children with SEMH needs
- Fewer children with SEND excluded from school
- Family feedback evidences a more positive experience
- More young people supported into training and employment

Connect Somerset

1. **Champions**, **hubs** and **neighbourhood teams** so services are close to home
2. **#Help4All** offer including targeting early help based on needs
3. **Investment in communities** and redesign delivery to start with the community
4. **Team around the school** wrapping resources around schools to improve attendance
5. **Early Help system workforce development** shared vision, shared case management and communications

- Less demand for statutory services because families are more resilient
- Integrated neighbourhood teams – more efficient shared estate, process, management
- More efficient delivery and increased take up of early help
- Increase delivery of digital and hybrid support
- Target help to those most in need – proactive offer

Sufficiency

Other Examples

- Having sufficient school places of the most appropriate phase and type, in the right locations for local children

- Ensuring, that we have the right support in place for children with SEND to enable them to get support early in life, to attend their local school wherever possible and for the very small proportion who need specialist education, that there are Somerset schools in which they can learn and achieve

Activity	Intended impact	Planned timescale	Benefits/Value for money
Increase the number of in house foster carers through improved recruitment and retention focus	More Somerset children looked after live in Somerset in Council led foster homes.	30 (net) additional Council foster carers for Somerset children by September 2026	A reduction in placement cost spend of up to £5 million by September 2026
Build relationships with local care providers so there are more residential and foster homes for Somerset children in Somerset	More Somerset children looked after live in Somerset.	6 more children in care are able to live in Somerset in independent sector homes, each year (an increase of 18 children by September 2024)	Reduced staff travelling time to visit children builds system capacity of 0.5 FTE social worker a year, at no additional cost.
Develop social capital options to expand Somerset residential homes potential	More Somerset children looked after live in Somerset.	One children's home delivered through social capital by September 2026.	Anticipated placement cost reduction in this home of 20% compared to similar private equity backed provision (due to 20% reduction in profit margin).
Develop Sufficient Short Breaks Capacity for Children with Disabilities	More Somerset children have access to short breaks to improve stability of home life	Full service review begins November 23	Reduced travel costs for families as provision is more locally based

Efficiency

Activity	Intended impact	Planned timescale	Benefits/Value for Money
Connect Somerset **Develop digital aspects to:** **a) The early help offer and** **b) Careers and post 16 education options**	a) Families can access help early and independently and when they are struggling b) Parents have easy access to information about careers and post-16 options	Initial pilot complete & alignment of digital comms opportunities by March 25	Reduced demand for statutory services Increased family confidence in seeking help locally Improved take up of post-16 education and training
Connect Somerset **Develop neighbourhood teams and multi-agency community hubs**	To provide effective delivery of a) Early Help b) Support to families and schools where children have SEND c) Community leadership with the school at its centre	Teams established by April 24 Rolling programme of hubs underway	Reduced demand for statutory services Increased family confidence in seeking help locally
School Transport Procurement	Improve procurement of school journey transport and the efficiency of routes provided	Programme in design following EDGE solutions review	Better value for money Increased number of children supported to attend their local school
Develop a whole system strategy to improve school attendance	Children attend school regularly, reducing exclusions	Whole system strategy in place by June 24	Improved school attendance Reduced exclusions Improved attainment

Managing Risk

Activity	Intended impact	Planned timescale	Benefits/Value for money
Early Years: **Improve the identification of need and effective intervention for vulnerable children**	Children are more ready to start school	Timelines in development	Long term under-achievement reduced Reduced escalation to High Needs Reduced exclusions
SEND Children: • **Embed graduated response** • **Quality Assurance programme for delivery of EHCP provision in schools** • **Reset the financial support offer to schools**	Schools have the tools and resources to support high quality support to SEND children Mainstream schools provide for the additional needs of SEND children early	Implement by April 2024	Reduced higher level interventions e.g. EHCPs More children supported to learn in their local school Reduced exclusions Improved attendance & attainment
Children at risk of exclusion from school Project	Support self-selected schools to reduce exclusions, embedding team around the school approach	Project complete June 24	Reduced exclusions Improved attendance & attainment
Somerset Schools: • **Encourage whole school focus** • **Create and embed peer challenge and support mechanisms across MATs**	Support schools to improve their practice and stop inadequate judgements Raise attainment for children, particularly those who are disadvantaged or vulnerable	Whole school focus launch October 23	Increased attainment Reduced migration to independent schools Reduced forced academisation

Time for Questions