

Decision made under the Council's Urgency Procedure by the Leader of the Council on 7 July 2021

Managing the impact of COVID-19 and maintaining sustainability of the social care market

Lead Member	Leader of the Council Councillor Isobel Seccombe
Date of decision	7 July 2021
	Signed

Decision

That the Leader of the Council:

- Authorise the Strategic Director for People to approve the costs to Warwickshire care providers to support the ongoing sustainability of the Adult Social Care market
- Approve funding for alternative provision to be put in place for NHS Health Checks.
- Approve continuation of funding for Sexual Health Postal Testing.
- Approve the Strategic Director for People to incur expenditure to support recovery activity across Children's Services.

The total estimated expenditure will be £2.978m; £2.498m from general Covid emergency grant funding and £480K from the Contain Outbreak Management fund spread over 2021/22 and 2022/23.

Reasons for decisions

An urgent decision is required of the Leader of the Council:

- To support the payment of contingency funds to care providers in Warwickshire in 2021/22 to assist with additional cost pressures of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.
- To support alternative and contingency arrangements for some public health provision in 2021/22 as a result of pressures related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.
- To support ongoing recovery activity within Children's Services during 2021/22 and 2022/23 with a specific focus on children in crisis, suicide prevention and children in need.

A delay in making and being able to implement the decision in these circumstances would seriously prejudice the public interest.

1.0 Key Issues and 2.0 & 3.0 Context

1.0 Key Issues

- 1.1 To help local authorities (LAs) maintain how they are managing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has provided an additional £1.55 billion of funding for 2021/22 to help LAs respond to COVID-19 pressures across all services. Warwickshire County Council (the Council) has been allocated approximately £10,800,000 in this latest funding round.
- 1.2 MHCLG have advised that the additional grant will be un-ringfenced, recognising that local authorities are best placed to determine local priorities.
- 1.3 For Adult Social Care, People Directorate are seeking approval to commit expenditure from the grant, where there is evidence of significant provider viability challenges.
- 1.4 To support Public Health, funding is requested to support NHS Health Checks and Sexual Health testing.
- 1.5 To support recovery within Children's Services, expenditure is requested to manage increasing demand to support children in crisis and children in need.

2.0 Support for the Adult Social Care and Public Health Market

2.1 Financial Support in 2020/21

- 2.2 In 2020/21, the Council received significant funds from the COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund to support a number of its responsibilities, including adult social care. In addition, national funding was made available to the care market by the DHSC via the two phases of Infection Control Funding, Lateral Flow Test funding and Workforce Capacity Funding.
- 2.3 The impact of COVID-19 on demand and cost within the care market has been closely monitored during 2020/21 to capture and report on the actual financial impact.
- 2.4 To date, with the support of the DHSC, the Council has provided additional and direct financial support upwards of £25,000,000 to the adult social care market as follows:

- Emergency Response Fund - £3,300,000 (financial support to providers via the Council's overall COVID-19 Tranche funding)
- Additional 'contingency' funding of £600,000 to support providers with significant viability issues
- PPE provided in 2020/21 - £1,200,000
- Infection Control Fund (round 1) - £7,200,000*
- Infection Control Fund (round 2) - £6,200,000*
- Rapid Testing Fund - £1,800,000*
- Workforce Capacity Fund - £1,100,000*
- Infection Control (round 3) and Rapid Test Fund - £3,800,000

** due to the conditions regarding the use of the funds, c£880,000 will be returned to Central Government.*

2.5 It is widely acknowledged that without this additional funding, the sustainability of the care market would not have been maintained throughout the pandemic, and vital services would have been lost, thus leaving some of our most vulnerable citizens at risk.

2.6 Financial Support in 2021/22

2.7 DHSC made further Infection Control Funding (round 3) and Rapid Test Fund funding of £3,800,000 available to the Council for the period April to June 2021 and on 27 June 2021, DHSC announced that an additional £250,000,000 was being made available up to the September 2021. The Council awaits notification of the local allocation.

2.8 Based on current care market intelligence the following areas have been identified where additional resources or support may be required during 2021/22:

2.9 Insurance Premia

2.10 One of the potential pressure points for social care providers is the rising costs of insurance, particularly in the care home and domiciliary care sector.

2.11 Cashflow

2.12 To maintain cashflow efficiency, providers are continuing to be paid on immediate payment terms (cash received within 7 days) as opposed to standard payment terms (30 days) as agreed by the Leader in the report of 8th April 2020. These temporary arrangements will be reviewed within the current financial year with any associated proposals relating to payments terms and conditions being presented to WCC Cabinet.

2.13 Service Specific Support

2.14 Given the impact of the pandemic on the ability of social care services to operate at optimum capacity levels some providers may need temporary financial support to ensure sustainability. There are no plans to support care providers with lost income due to reduced occupancy levels, however, consideration may be given to supporting providers of strategic importance within the local market should they experience significant financial challenges or agreeing temporary pay on plan arrangements.

2.15 We anticipate the maximum total value of these support proposals (paragraph 2.8 to 2.14) is £0.843m.

2.16 Given the impact of the pandemic on increased demand for certain services the following has been identified where additional resources will be required:

- a) NHS Health Checks Alternative Provision - Delivery of this mandated public health service, delivered by GPs across Warwickshire, has been impacted because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Additional expenditure of £100,000 would enable commissioners to put in place temporary alternative provision for one year as it is

not expected that GPs will be able to restore health-check provision to pre-pandemic levels during this time.

- b) Integrated Sexual Health Services – Up to £480,000 is being requested to enable the Integrated Sexual Health Service to continue to provide online testing for Sexually Transmitted Infections. The online offer enables testing to take place at home, via postal deliveries, with less presentation required to hospital settings. The current online offer was developed as part of the pandemic response, in line with national guidance for the delivery of sexual health services. The intention is to use the Contain Outbreak Management Fund for this service as it meets the spending criteria.

2.20 The estimates above are based on assumptions of potential demand and costs due to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021/22. This will be monitored over the funding period to capture and report on the forecast and actual financial impact.

3.0 Supporting Recovery in Children's Services

3.1 Financial Support in 2021/22

3.2 In 2021-2022 additional Covid pressures for placement costs, legal costs and workforce of £631,000 were allocated but since this time there has been significant further additional pressures within Children's Services due to the ongoing impact of the pandemic. The following areas have been identified where additional expenditure is required to support recovery during 2021/22.

3.3 Children in Crisis and Responding to Deaths by Suicide

3.4 There is a current focus within Coventry and Warwickshire on supporting children in crisis given the significant increase in demand for mental health support and the numbers of children and young people presenting at UHCW and Warwick Hospital. Given the need to effectively support the system response to this demand current mental health commissioning resource is being re-directed to support. As a result, additional CAMHS commissioning support is required to respond to demands and to deliver a number of commissioning service developments and expansions that need to take place at a cost of £55,000.

3.5 Given the continued need to focus on suicide prevention in response to the pandemic, and concerns about the rates of deaths by suicide, a full time Suicide Prevention Post is required for a 24- month period to bolster existing resource focused on this agenda within Public Health and People Strategy and Commissioning. Total expenditure of £124,000 for the post is required.

3.6 To support delivery of the new Suicide Prevention Strategy Priorities, expenditure is also requested of £150,000 to provide an implementation fund for evidence-based prevention interventions.

3.7 Education Services are required to support an Independent Management Review as part of the current Domestic Homicide Review. It is proposed an independent reviewer is

commissioned for a 3-month period (July/Aug-Sept/Oct) to conduct the review at a cost of £40,000.

3.8 Children in Need and Children in Care

3.9 The number of children at the edge of care (Children in Need) and children already in care who are experiencing mental health and wellbeing issues, as well as an escalation in their behaviour, has increased due to the pandemic. The stability of children in care is a significant concern and area we are focussing upon to ensure this improved. Our strategy is to increase the support to foster carers, so that children can remain within foster care homes, or step down from residential children's homes back to foster care.

3.10 Some children do need residential care and for those children to remain local in Warwickshire we need to further engage and support the children's residential home market within Warwickshire to be able to offer good quality placements. This will enable children to maintain links within their community and should increase the potential for those children to be supported to step down to foster care or even be rehabilitated back with their family or connected others.

3.11 To support this we request the following expenditure:

- Additional support to Placement Hub - £35,000 to search and match appropriate homes for children in care.
- Additional Learning and Development Officer and Quality Assurance Officer to support and improve quality of local residential home provision - £102,000.
- Additional support to provide wrap around care and support for children to remain in foster care. This will include employment or commissioning of a Play Therapist, three Systemic Therapy Social Workers, four Family Support Workers and two youth workers - £450,000.
- Additional and integrated Speech, Language and Communication support in Youth Justice Team and Children in Care Team - £113,000.

3.12 Increasing Child in Need Support

3.13 Given the impact of the pandemic on increased demand for children and family services we require increased support for children and young people. To manage demand and ensure the right support is provided additional Family Support Worker provision is required within the Initial Response Team at a cost of £205,000.

3.14 To respond to the need for strategic and system wide consideration of the demand challenges and pressures faced by Early Help and Early Years services as a consequence of the pandemic, we are seeking to create a temporary Partnership Manager post for one year to review the current offer and lead system changes to make these services work better as an integrated system approach in the aftermath of the pandemic. Total expenditure of £61,000 is required.

3.15 Croxall Street- Bedworth

3.16 The pandemic has increased pressure upon venues and space required for family time; this is the contact between children in care and their families. More venues and space are required due to the increase in children in care and to ensure compliance with Covid-19 social distancing regulations. In addition, demand for early help and statutory services has increased significantly within Bedworth, where there is currently limited youth service provision. A Warwickshire County Council building at Croxall Street Bedworth has become available and if renovated it has been identified as suitable to extend Family Time and Youth Service facilities in Bedworth. The full cost of renovation of the Croxall Street Centre building will be £220,000.

4.0 Financial implications

4.1 In line with the detail above the following is a summary of what would be allocated - 2.978m in total of which £2.498m would be from the general Covid emergency grant funding and £480K from the Contain Outbreak Management fund spread over 2021/22 and 2022/23. WCC Finance have confirmed sufficient funds are available to support these two allocations.

4.2 Summary Table

2021/22 Expenditure Request £m	2022/23 Expenditure Request £m	2023/24 Expenditure Request £m	Purpose of Expenditure:
0.843	0.000	0.000	Ref 2.15 Targeted Financial Support to ASC providers
0.100	0.000	0.000	Ref 2.16a Targeted alternative provision for NHS Health Checks
0.027	0.028	0.000	Ref 3.4 12 Month fixed term contract for Children in Crisis Commissioner
0.030	0.062	0.032	Ref 3.5 24 Month fixed term contract to Refresh Suicide Prevention Strategy
0.038	0.075	0.037	Ref 3.6 £150k is funding to support delivery of the refreshed suicide prevention strategy priorities and support further suicide response work. This is an estimate as the precise nature and value of spend will not be known until work on the strategy has commenced.
0.480 (represents 12 month cost estimated by George Eliot Hospital)	0.00	0.00	Ref 2.16b To continue to fund Sexual Health Posting Testing for a further 6 months, potentially 12 months dependent on sufficient progress being seen on the transformation required. AD for Finance has advised there is COMF funding available for this.

Total 21/22 1.518m	Total 22/23 0.165m	Total 23/24 0.069m	
0.035	0.000	0.000	Ref 3.11a Additional support to Placement Hub
0.028 for QA Officer in CSU 0.023 for L&D Officer in PS&C	0.028 for QA Officer in CSU 0.023 for L&D Officer in PS&C .055	0.000	Ref 3.11b Additional Learning and Development Officer and Quality Assurance Officer for 12 month period
0.135	0.070	0.000	Ref 3.13 6 Family Support Workers Initial Response
0.225	0.225	0.000	Ref 3.11c Employment or commissioning of a Play Therapist, three Systemic Therapy Social Workers, four Family Support Workers and two youth workers
0.038	0.075	0.000	Ref 3.11d Commission additional integrated Speech, Language and Communication support in Youth Justice Team and Children in Care Team
0.220	0.000	0.000	Ref 3.16 Renovation of Croxall Street-Bedworth
0.030	0.031	0	Ref 3.14 Partnership Manager
0.040	0	0	Ref 3.7 Domestic Homicide Review
Total 21/22 0.774	Total 22/23 0.452	Total 23/24 0.000	
Full total 21/22 2.292	Full total 22/23 0.617	Full total 22/23 0.069	

- Note – Full allocations between financial years are “fluid” until recruitment / appointment of staff is finalised.

5.0 Environmental implications

5.1 Environmental considerations will be a feature of the decision-making process to provide temporary financial support to care providers and the development of the Croxall Street facility.

6.0 Timescales Associated with the Decision and Next Steps

6.1 It is appropriate that this report should be dealt with under the Urgent Decision procedure in the Warwickshire County Council Constitution to support with ongoing cost pressures and impact on the sustainability of the social care market and children’s services as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Report Author	Tim Willis, Becky Hale and John Coleman
Assistant Director	Becky Hale and John Coleman
Lead Director	Nigel Minns
Lead Member	Leader of the Council

Urgent matter?	Yes
Confidential or exempt?	Yes
Is the decision contrary to the budget and policy framework?	No

Lists of reports considered

Not applicable

List of background papers

Supporting Warwickshire's care market and delivery services with additional cost pressures as a result of COVID-19 (Decision made under the Council's Urgency Procedure by the Leader of the Council on 8th April 2020).

Members and officers consulted and informed

Portfolio Holder – Councillor Mrs Margaret Bell, Councillor Mr Jeff Morgan – 2 July 2021

Corporate Board – 2 July 2021

Legal – Sarah Duxbury and Alison Hallworth

Finance – Andy Felton and Rob Powell

Equality – N/A

Democratic Services – Helen Barnsley

Councillors –

Councillor Yousef Dahmash - for consent to urgency

Councillor Clare Golby – for consent to urgency