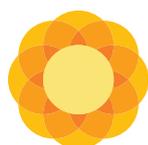




Strategic Business Plan

2018-2023

2020/21 (Year 3) Update



BIRMINGHAM
CHILDREN'S TRUST



**Birmingham Children's Trust Business Plan
2018-2023 2020/21 (Year 3) Update**

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Foreword from the Birmingham Children in Care Council and Care Leavers' Forum



Thank you for once again inviting the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers' Forum to write a foreword for Birmingham Children's Trust Business Plan.

In our last report we challenged the Trust to make a difference and it definitely has, we are SO PROUD to be a part of this!

It has been a hugely busy year with some amazing achievements. This is the year that Ofsted called us dynamic (we agree!). It's also been a year of challenges. So, when we were asked to present in front of nearly 1000 people we did it! We have interviewed the most

senior people (waves at Jenny); we have led on campaigns and been asked to comment on new pieces of work, new approaches and have influenced front-line practice.

The Mind Your Language campaign we started in 2018 continues to gather momentum - **"Don't call me LAC... I am a child in care AND I am not LACKING in anything."**

We ran workshops at two national conferences and one regional conference and are working with other young people's groups who are taking this forward in their own areas. We know the Trust is 100% behind this and have shown their commitment clearly – THANK YOU!

We were integral in the production of the new Extended Care Leavers Offer and campaigned successfully to have Council Tax exemption extended to 25. We have also successfully campaigned to change the Trust's policy so that children in care get a £500 Maternity Grant. We have produced our first (but certainly not last!) e-learning tool for frontline professionals to help them talk to young people about sexual health, puberty and relationships. We had hugely positive responses to this from those who have used it.

We have grown as individuals and as a group - we invite in new young people all the time and pride ourselves that our groups are growing in numbers. We believe any child in care, care experienced or care leaver has something amazing to say and we want to hear it - we are continuing to meet and work virtually at this time.

The work we do makes a real difference to all of Birmingham's children in care and care leavers and we are very proud.

Our top tips for everyone in the Trust remain the same:

- Listen to real first hand experiences.
- Work alongside me, work with me, explain things and then explain again! Remember I am at the centre.
- Don't think you know what I am trying to say, don't second guess me, use the words I choose to use.
- Talk to children and young people, have conversations, properly listen and take an interest in my life.

We are excited to be going into YEAR 3 and have so much more planned!



Section 1

Introduction

1. Introduction

Welcome to this, the second update to the Children's Trust Business Plan.

Looking back over our first two plans, it is plain to see the progression to the point we have now reached. This plan sets out an altogether more ambitious vision for the future as we strive to improve outcomes for those with whom we work and to make the Trust the best possible social care organisation, as an employer, as a partner and as a delivery organisation.

We know we have made progress. We know there is more to do. We are determined that the Trust will be delivering, on behalf of as well as in partnership with Birmingham City Council (BCC), consistently and sustainably good services to children and families across the city within the period of the first five years of the contract. This means 'Good' as judged by Ofsted on their next full inspection, likely to be in 2021.

So what does 'Good' look like? Amongst other things:

- the quality of practice is consistently good in all areas of the city and all parts of the Trust.
- our partnership work with other agencies is producing better, and better joined-up, services for children, young people and families: Early Help, Family Support, MASH, Contextual Safeguarding: all of our work is characterised by strong multi-disciplinary collaboration and integration.
- our work with families is collaborative: based on relationships, and building on families' strengths, recognising the impact of trauma, clear that for the vast majority of the children and young people we work with, their families are the best places for them to be.
- the Trust as an employer supporting its staff, through manageable caseloads, good supervision, development and progression opportunities, becoming the social work employer of choice in the region.
- the Trust grows into an integrated, collaborative organisation where every one of our 1850 colleagues feels part of, and understands their role in, delivering the best services we can to the most vulnerable in the city. An organisation where everyone has a voice, and every idea to improve what we do is valued and heard.

This is very much work in progress, but led with a determination, from the Trust Board and its leadership, to push on and to maintain our pace of improvement.

We face some significant financial challenges. This business plan sets out the scale of these: based on benchmarking data around current funding levels, and on forecasts for rising demand for services from the Trust, we have set out what we believe our future looks like, and welcome the additional national funding for children's social care announced by the Government. While we have areas in which we will continue to seek to deliver greater efficiency in our services, and resultant savings, these will be simply off-setting rising demand. For many years, Birmingham has had a low number of children in care, measured against national, core city and statistical neighbour comparators. As we improve our services we are seeing the number rise towards a level more commensurate with similar authorities.

This plan is being published while we are all under the shadow of the threat posed by the Coronavirus. Like every agency the Trust is reshaping, as we strive, with our partners, to continue to deliver effective services while the full impact of the crisis on our capacity and on staff illness or absence through self-isolation is unknown. At the time of writing, it is too early to tell for how long the crisis will last, too early to tell the impact on the ability of the Trust to meet all the objectives set out in the plan and deliver its services, and too early to understand fully the financial/economic impact of the unprecedented situation in which we find ourselves.

However, we are clear our key responsibility is to ensure that we are providing the right type, and level, of intervention and support to the right children at the right time, for the right reasons. While there is more that we and the Children's Partnership can do to bolster our prevention and early help services, it would be naïve to assume the number of children in care will not plateau at a higher level than has been the case in the last five years. This plan sets out our forecast, the rationale, and the impact in terms of funding. We have a strong relationship with the City Council: it is built on mutual respect, openness and transparency, and we are confident we can work together to ensure the Trust is able to meet the needs of the city's most vulnerable children and families.

We have much we can be proud of, in what our people working in the Trust have achieved to date, but we are humble about the work we still need to do to be the best we can be.

Andrew Christie
Chair

Andy Couldrick
Chief Executive



Section 2

Our Vision and Values

2. Birmingham Children's Trust 2020: Our Vision and Values

Our vision is to build a Trust that provides excellent social work and family support for and with the city's most vulnerable children, young people and families.

We will do this:

- with compassion and with care.
- through positive relationships, building on strengths.
- in collaboration with children, young people, families and partners.
- by listening, involving and including.
- in ways that are efficient and deliver value for money.

Success will mean significant progress towards these outcomes:

- healthy, happy, resilient children living in families.
- families able to make positive changes.
- children able to attend, learn and achieve at school.
- young people ready for and contributing to adult life.
- children and young people safe from harm.

Birmingham Children's Trust has now 'found its feet'. After an initial deliberate, unswerving focus on the quality of practice, which led to an improved Ofsted judgement in December 2018, 2019 was largely about consolidation and building our knowledge and understanding of the services, how they operate and interact, and where we can find further improvement. We have been doing this whilst demand for services grows. Opportunities to do things differently have been identified, and some significant savings yielded to mitigate the upward care cost pressures.

As we move into 2020/21, consolidation continues: the Trust operates the largest social care system in the country, with many social workers and teams. Driving consistency of practice remains a key priority. There is still variability in practice, but audit and evaluation suggest it is now narrowing. The reputation of Birmingham, in relation to children's social work, is changing. People across the region want to come here to work. We are attracting inward investment: the Department for Education, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Youth Endowment Fund, the Violence Reduction Unit all support Trust activity, with confidence.

Partners from the corporate sector (including Fortem, Barclays, Jacobs, Birmingham City Football Club, Aston Villa) have all invested time and resources and created new opportunities for our young people. We are a trusted partner, and a system leader, in the Children's Partnership in the city.

We have also identified some key areas where improvement, expansion and doing things differently will have an important impact going forward. These are set out later in the plan. The initiatives are underpinned by our core values:

BIRMINGHAM CHILDREN'S
ONE TEAM
ACCOUNTABLE AND RESPONSIBLE
QUALITY
RELATIONSHIPS
HIGH SUPPORT HIGH CHALLENGE

These values are reflected in the model that underpins our practice right across the Trust:

- **Relational:** practice invested in relationships with child and family; understanding of relationships and attachments and their importance in assessments and plans. Built on the idea of 'High Support, High Challenge'.
- **Contextual:** understanding the context in which people with whom we are working are: family; economic; social; school; employment. Understanding context is pivotal to learning how we can help.
- **Trauma-informed:** practice based on an understanding of the impact of past adverse events and experiences, that is sensitive to trauma and focused on the means of moving beyond trauma, for children and young people and for families, building resilience and confidence.



Section 3

Demand and Costs

3. Demand and Costs in the Children's Trust

Introduction

Since its inception, Birmingham Children's Trust has sought to operate within its funding envelope, achieving a successful balanced budget in its first operating year. Year 2 has proved more challenging as services have improved, risk assessment and responses sharpened, and demand for services has changed. The Trust, in Year 2, overspent its budget by £7m (3.5%).

Nationally, Government has recognised that there is pressure in most local authority areas around children's social care services (the average overspend across England in 2019/20 is reported at 9%). The key demand and cost drivers are all rising: numbers of children in care, on child protection plans, and assessed as children in need, requiring a social work intervention. There are multiple causes, including poverty and the impact of universal credit, austerity and the denuding of universal services' capacity to meet children's needs earlier and to 'hold' children and young people in universal services, and raised professional anxiety about risk to children. These factors together drive demand in children's social care systems.

In Birmingham, the emerging picture is complex. The Trust has attempted to set out a realistic picture of demand in the system and its impact on costs and contract value going forward. For 2020/21, in recognition of the Council's position, and the challenges posed by a 1-year Spending Round, the Trust has agreed a position where it will receive a modest £6.1m (or 3% of the budget) investment to address growth, committed for only one year. It is the Trust's intention in 2020 to test these assumptions through independent reviews, around demand management and commissioning, around our practice model and structure, and in doing so to set out an independently verified position, which we hope can be agreed with the Council as our commissioners, of what demand and growth look like over the next 3-5 years, and the management arrangements in the Trust to address these. This will inform the medium-term financial planning of both the Council and the Trust. The reviews commissioned are from CIPFA (on Trust financial management) and C.Co (CIPFA's commercial arm) on cost management, commissioning and market engagement: getting value from our planning, care commissioning and procurement

Changes in Demand

When the Trust went live there were 1805 children in its care. Today that number hovers around 1950. This growth takes the rate of children in care in Birmingham up to just below 70/10000. The average for our statistical neighbours is around 77/10000, for core cities nearer to 80/10000. There are several factors influencing this rate including historic under-identification of risk of harm and an approach determined to keep children at home or to characterise care by family members as 'private arrangements', contrary to current statutory guidance. Of the increase in children entering care since the Trust went live, over half the children had been subject to social work intervention for 2+ years. While some families need and benefit from such long-term support, the Trust has to be able to know, and to evidence, that the situation for the children in the family is improving, and risks are reducing. In too many cases, we could not be confident this was the case and children remained with their families for too long when they should have been in care.

The sharpest rise has been in admissions of young people aged 16+. This reflects growing awareness and concern about the range of 'contextual safeguarding' and exploitation risks faced by young people. The Trust's development of the multi-agency Contextual Safeguarding Hub introduces discrete expertise and tailored interventions for these young people. Care will not routinely equate to safety for many, so we need family and community responses that make young people safer. However, the early work of the Hub is uncovering evidence of some unmet need and unassessed risk that need to be managed safely and successfully.

The absence of an effective Early Help offer for families across the city has also meant that Trust resources have filled this space to a considerable extent, meaning that our resources to support families to prevent care admission have been denuded. Establishing an effective Early Help offer will enable some repositioning of Trust Family Support resources to provide more intensive, targeted support. This, alongside greater investment in family decision-making through Family Group Conferences, and renewed focus on ‘exits’ for children in care, through permanence, returning to families, should enable the Trust to avoid ever-increasing care numbers. But the rate is unlikely to fall to the previous low level and might be predicted to rise slightly further in the absence of effective mitigating actions. The Trust’s working premise is to plan around a care population that could rise as high as 2200. This would represent a rate still lower (73/10000) than statistical neighbours and core cities.

It is important to remember that previous DfE commissioners, notably Lord Warner, raised the issue of whether enough vulnerable children and children in need in the city were receiving appropriate levels of support and there was quite likely to be hidden harm; so some upward adjustment might be seen as a necessary and appropriate correction. Certainly nothing emerging from audit, practice evaluation, threshold reviews or family court feedback is suggesting that we are caring for children for whom it is not necessary and appropriate.

Funding of Children’s Social Care in Birmingham

In the public consultation on the City Council budget for 2020/21, child protection and support for families emerge as two of the five top priorities for the city’s citizens. This replicates previous years’ results.

And yet despite the Council’s additional investment Birmingham’s spending on children’s social care is comparatively low. The average spend amongst core cities, according to recent Grant Thornton (CFO Insights) benchmarking for 2019/20, is £120 per child more than is spent in Birmingham. This spending gap amounts to £30m a year lower funding in Birmingham than the average for core cities.

Spend on Children’s Social Care 2019/20 – Core Cities: Source Data CFO Insights

Local Authority/ Trust	Total Spend Children’s Social Care (each city’s spend divided by that city’s child population aged 0-17)
Birmingham	£770.41
Bristol	£807.64
Leeds	£855.34
Liverpool	£1,011.70
Manchester	£933.51
Newcastle	£934.63
Nottingham	£924.62
Sheffield	£771.18

When the budget was established for the Trust a lower number of children in care (1630) had been forecast, along with a significantly higher proportion of children in care living with Trust foster carers. In fact, the number in care was 1805 on 1 April 2018, and the number of foster carers was falling, as it had the previous three years, as resignations outstripped new recruits. It is only in the Trust’s second year, 2019/20, that this picture has reversed, but numbers remain very low.

There were, therefore, considerable pressures ‘baked in’ to the Trust’s budget. Further reductions were made at the start of 2019/20 when the Trust budget reduced by £5m (2.5%, at a time when nationally spending on children’s social care rose by an average of 6.8%).

Inherited Budget Anomalies

The Children's Trust inherited a significant vacancy factor in its staffing budgets: in effect, in most of the social work teams, there is a post in the establishment that is not funded. There is no capacity to cover periods of extended sickness or maternity leave, and the tension between staying within budget and enabling social workers to retain manageable caseloads, when demand is rising, is becoming increasingly difficult to manage safely.

The Children's Trust manages the Troubled Families programme on behalf of the Council. The programme grant-funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, with a fee generated when we establish an 'attachment' to a family, and a second 'payment by results' award when we can demonstrate sustained change in the family (whether in terms of reduced offending, improved school engagement, return to work for parents etc).

Another inheritance the Trust has to manage within this, is that approximately £2m of Troubled Families grant was used by the Council as core funding for the Trust's Family Support and Youth Offending services. So when the grant stops, funding for these critical areas stops. This was not a sustainable decision and will need to be addressed so that core Trust services receive core funding. This in turn will release Troubled Families grant to be redeployed supporting further Early Help services, as was intended in the programme.

The Trust Budget 2019/20, and Beyond

Despite these challenges, the Trust's budget deficit at year-end 2019/20, is £7m or 3.5% of overall budget, compared with the reported national average overspend of 9%. This has been achieved through a combination of revenue savings and one-off treatments, use of reserves, etc.

Agreement was reached on a one-year budget increase for the Trust for 2020/21, of £6.1m. This means that the Trust begins 2020/21 with a significant savings target: to recoup the £6.1m that is one-off funding, and to recoup the existing in-year revenue pressures masked by the one-off treatments. In total, the Trust starts 2020 needing to save £7m to deliver a balanced budget by year end 2021. Given the one year nature of the settlement, the ongoing underlying pressure on the Trust remains at £13.2m.

Two 'Invest to Save' proposals were agreed in the Council's budget-setting, to support achieving this challenge:

- the introduction of adult specialists in children's teams: domestic abuse, substance misuse, adult mental health specialists working with and alongside social workers will increase our capacity, resilience and risk management arrangements to keep children within their families where adults have these particular issues in their lives.
- capital investment to enable the Trust to provide its own supported accommodation to vulnerable older young people, at a higher quality and lower cost than that available in the private sector currently.

These, along with significant Council and partner investment in Early Help, are intended to contribute to 'stemming the flow' of children and young people needing Trust intervention and to provide diversions from care that are risk-assessed, safe and appropriate. To an extent this will, however, be offset by the need and risk we are now uncovering as we develop more joined up, multi-agency, intelligence-driven responses to children going missing, at risk of exploitation, 'county lines' etc. This is why we are planning for the possibility of a permanent increase in our care population to 2200. Without investment in Early Help, as outlined above, there is every reason to assume a care population rising to a rate closer to other core cities: this would mean a further 200 children in the Trust's care.

A higher number in care, along with more children on child protection plans, would put increased pressure on caseloads, for social workers, child protection chairs and independent reviewing officers. It would become necessary, over the next three years, to plan for an expansion in the Trust's social work establishment. This upward pressure would make the inherited vacancy/turnover factor in the social work teams increasingly unviable into the future.

Higher numbers in care would mean higher spend on placements too. While we look to grow more of our own foster carers, and to provide more supported accommodation, the cost pressure around older children in care, for more of whom residential care becomes the likely care type, is likely to rise.

And finally, more children in care would convert to an increased number of care leavers who need, and have a statutory right to, support up to the age of 25. Our 18+ service has large caseloads already (an average of 27 compared to 17 for social workers) and this element of the establishment would also need to expand.

In summary, the Trust's proposition is that to be financially sustainable it needs some significant revenue investment from the City Council: detailed budget papers will be developed and shared with commissioners during 2020 in preparation for the 2021 budget. The request is likely to come in at £10-15m in revenue funding growth (still less than half of the total received by the Council to support growth in demand for social care for children and adults).

In the event the early help and other preventative measures are more successful than the plan assumes, the contract allows for a 'gain-share' return to the Council as commissioner of the Trust. The appropriate model, therefore, is that the Trust is not subject to annual departmental spending and savings rounds, but rather is held to account within its internal governance, and by its commissioners, and that any surpluses achieved are returned through the contractual mechanism to the Council.

The Trust is, of course, engaged in a programme of efficiency delivery, looking across our support services and focusing on the two key elements that drive our financial health: demand and supply.

Demand:

- an effective, multi-disciplinary Early Help system across the city can meet need and support families without needing to refer on to the Trust. The Trust can then also reposition its Family Support resources to offer more intensive services to families at greater and more immediate risk of breakdown, avoiding unnecessary care admissions.
- investing in targeted Family Support: reallocation of resource, combined with DfE Supporting Families funding, to increase the reach and scope of our Family Group Conferences, enabling families to make decisions and find solutions for their children and young people; investment in targeted family support in the community, supporting the most vulnerable families.
- developing our multi-agency Contextual Safeguarding Hub: supporting families and communities to keep young people safe when at risk of exploitation.

Supply:

- increased and improved marketing and recruitment activity leading to a rise in the number of Trust foster carers and adoptive families for our children.
- improved contract management and care commissioning for children and young people.
- increased contributions to placement costs from partners (NHS, Education) reflecting a more equitable share of responsibility.
- providing in-house supported accommodation rather than purchasing placements from the private sector.



Section 4

Strategic Context

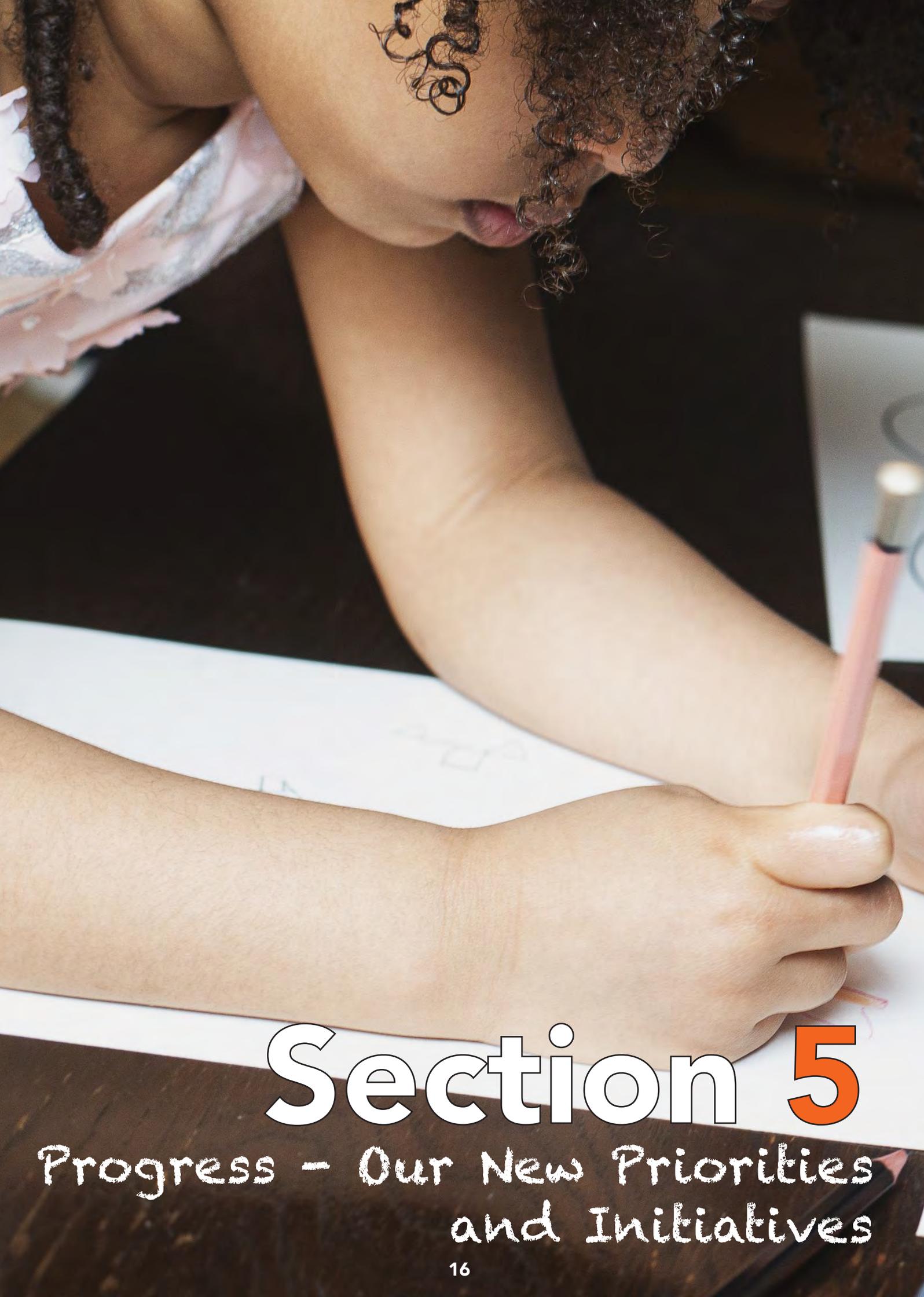
4. Strategic Context for the Children's Trust

Two years on from our creation, the Children's Trust is now an established partner amongst service providers for children and families across the city. Collaboration with Police, Health, Education and the third sector are all stronger, and the Trust's leaders are now respected contributors to system leadership across the City now.

The context for children's services remains challenging. Poverty, social exclusion, domestic abuse, mental health and substance misuse all drive demand for Trust services. Our new, integrated partnership work on Contextual Safeguarding is already beginning to identify hidden need around young people's exploitation in the city. We are seeking, as set out in Section 5 below, to take a more creative approach to tackling these issues with our partners, building capacity and resilience through earlier intervention, and equipping social workers with greater skills and resources on which to draw with and for their families.

The financial environment remains a challenging one, but strong and effective partnership working between the Trust and the Council means that sensible short and longer term plans are in development to recognise the pressures under which the Trust is operating.

Increasingly Birmingham is seen as the exemplar set of arrangements in terms of Trust delivery and partnership with the Council as the Trust's owner and commissioner.



Section 5

Progress - Our New Priorities
and Initiatives

5. Progress and Our New Priorities and Initiatives

Our Trust Development Plan, established to capture our response to the 2018 Ofsted ILACS inspection, outlined our priorities. The plan has been regularly updated, along with the Trust self-evaluation, and in February 2020, as part of the Focused Visit, we shared with Ofsted the progress we have made, and the impact we have had, across the domains of the Development Plan. Outstanding areas, and those needing further focus, will now be carried forward into the next Trust plan.

In summary, progress is evident across all of the areas for improvement identified by Ofsted in 2018. In addition we have:

- made progress in the first stage of our review of Business Support, including to release savings and establish a fit for purpose management structure.
- strengthened our children's legal service and increased capacity to progress cases through the courts, leading to improving practice and improving trust and confidence with the judiciary.
- strengthened our out of hours Edge of Care offer to combat emergency care admissions.
- established a stronger leadership structure in the Trust to enable greater grip on, and accountability for, our services.
- maintained manageable caseloads across social work and family support.
- rolled out Practice Leader Development for 100+ managers (every manager and leader in the Trust, from Team Manager to Chief Executive, will have participated by the end of 2020).
- strengthened our 'front door': Children's Advice and Support Service (CASS), Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), and Contextual Safeguarding. The February 2020 Ofsted Focused Visit, examining the Trust 'front door', CASS, MASH, assessment and short-term intervention (ASTI) and the new Contextual Safeguarding Hub, has provided a valuable check on progress.

The Focused Visit letter, setting out Ofsted's findings, was published in March 2020 and confirmed further progress and improvement in the front door arrangements since the December 2018 inspection, particularly in respect of threshold application, management oversight and decision-making. Ofsted also commented on very good staff morale in the CASS, MASH and ASTI services. Ofsted said "All staff spoken to are positive about working for the Trust and the progress made since its inception. Staff report receiving consistently good support from all tiers of highly visible leaders and managers, which is positively impacting on recruitment and retention rates. This means that children and families are experiencing fewer changes of workers and are thus able to build more trusting relationships".

As well as continuing to lead, drive and support better practice across the Trust, and in support of improving practice and outcomes for children, young people and families, our key strategic priorities for 2020/21 are set out below:

Birmingham Children’s Trust Strategic Priorities 2020/21: Impact and Risks

Strategic Priority	Impact/Benefits	Risks (<i>Mitigation</i>)
<p>Review our service structure to develop a new operating model:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social work structure • Emergency Duty Team • Disabled Children’s Social Work Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer social worker changes for children • More integrated day/out of hours service offering better responses and improved safety planning; longer, ‘flexible day’ in operation • Resources, focus and practice are better integrated with wider service to support Trust priorities and best practice: child-centred, family-focused 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade Union opposition to change (<i>early engagement; adherence to process</i>) • Loss of staff unhappy with changes proposed (<i>early and frequent consultation; clear evidenced rationale for change; staff support</i>) • ‘Extended day’ proposals frustrated by lack of staff uptake (<i>messaging; offer of flexibility as part of wider Trust Agile Working programme</i>)
<p>Lead/support the development of a new, city-wide Early Help service</p>	<p>If Trust is the chosen deliverer of new service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New locality-based multi-disciplinary service ‘up and running’ swiftly • Increased active early help to children, young people and families • Potential reduction of contacts/referrals to Trust <p>Potential reduction in demand across Trust: Child in Need; Child Protection; Child in Care</p> <p>If Trust is not the deliverer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation supported to ensure focus on the right children and families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust capacity stretched to deliver new service (<i>programme includes leadership and delivery capacity</i>) • Failure to recruit (<i>low risk</i>) • Reputation risk if service does not deliver agreed outcomes (<i>partnership governance and support to delivery</i>) • Capacity too limited to achieve intended outcomes (<i>develop model that includes secondment of existing capacity to grow service</i>) • Focus of service does not impact on contact/referral into the Trust (<i>agreed impact</i>)

Strategic Priority	Impact/Benefits	Risks (Mitigation)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome measures/success criteria agreed and in place • Reduced demand on Trust services 	<p><i>measures/success criteria; Trust support to new service to focus on risk at right points)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact does not allow reductions in Trust funding as need for care not avoided (<i>active service and financial monitoring and risk reporting in the Children's Partnership</i>)
Redesign our Family Support service	<p>(Linked to implementation of Early Help service)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less capacity used in Early Help • More focused support to children and families at greater risk of breakdown • Stronger links with Edge of Care Service • Fewer care admissions, particularly of older young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change of focus leaves some staff dissatisfied: churn in service (<i>clear early consultation; secure buy-in around rationale; recruit to vacancies that emerge</i>) • Loss of identity and value of the Family Support role and service in remodelled structure (<i>recognition of value of FS; communication and messaging; development of closer aligned/integrated SW and FS leadership and management</i>)
Establish our RAA partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress towards position of 100% of Birmingham children placed with Birmingham adopters • Maintained highly regarded adoption support services • Compliance with Government requirement • Stronger partnership service model with VAA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service does not deliver adopter sufficiency (<i>active partnership working with VAA partner; bring together best of VAA and the Trust; monitoring and exception reporting on progress</i>) • Failure to achieve necessary partnership (<i>low risk: VAA interest considerable</i>) • New model not accepted by DfE as compliant (<i>low risk; maintain close communication</i>)

Strategic Priority	Impact/Benefits	Risks (Mitigation)
Review and recommission our residential care and short breaks offer to children with disabilities and their families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved service effectiveness and efficiency Improved occupancy levels Greater tailoring of support to need Enhanced service offer through new commissioning approach (including potential strategic partnership for delivery) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parental dissatisfaction with proposed changes (<i>early engagement and co-production; clear articulation of benefits/improvements</i>) Staff unhappiness with new model (<i>early engagement and co-production; clear articulation of problems we are trying to address</i>) Political dissent (<i>early engagement and co-production; clear articulation of benefits/improvements</i>)
Develop new commissioning models : care and support; new, Trust-owned supported accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Move away from inherited block contracted model New care models commissioned, better integrating residential and family-based care New cross-sector delivery partnerships established Jointly commissioned Emotional/Mental Health Tier 3.5 provision Replace independent/private sector supported accommodation with Trust-run services: better quality, lower cost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to stimulate market to co-produce new models with the Trust (<i>building relationships and common interests; competitive dialogue approaches</i>) Capacity challenge around delivery of 'in-house' supported accommodation (<i>ensure project delivery, as well as leadership capacity</i>)
Improve financial management via Trust-wide CIPFA financial management review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stronger financial management across the Trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of engagement (<i>Trust leaders and managers accountable for making it happen, and implementing improvements</i>)
Complete Business Support review post-Eclipse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficient business support supporting social work teams to maximise time spent with children and families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trade Union opposition to change (<i>clear, compliant engagement and consultation processes; evidence-base clear for required changes</i>)

Strategic Priority	Impact/Benefits	Risks (Mitigation)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective use of Eclipse as a time-saving recording tool 	
<p>Commission (with Birmingham City Council) independent reviews: looking at demand; unit costs; practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To feed into 2021-22 budget-setting, an objective and independent position, agreed with the Council, reflecting future demand and growth in the Trust and consequent funding requirements • A shared Council/Trust position around prevention, early help and targeted support 	
<p>Recruitment and retention pipeline; pay and rewards to keep the Trust competitive as the social work employer of choice in the region</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective recruitment • Retention mechanisms, through progression and reward, that keep experienced social workers in the Trust • Further conversions of agency social workers into Trust employees • New social work apprenticeship scheme operating: first cohort of 'home grown' social workers commencing training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The constraints of Birmingham City Council Equal Pay lead to a deteriorating recruitment and retention pipeline (<i>independent legal advice for the Trust on what we can do to incentivise retention of experienced staff; close monitoring of exit patterns and reasons</i>) • Budget pressures limit our potential to implement non-contractual incentives (<i>maintain active focus and management pressure on care and costs</i>)

In addition, we will be developing and implementing a range of new and innovative services and activities to drive and support practice improvement, including:

- investment in **targeted family support**: enhancing families' support systems and enabling them to care for their children well.
- expanded **Family Group Conference** service, enabling more families to take control and make decisions with and about their children and young people. The model draws and builds on families' strengths and supports families to create plans that keep children with them safely. Within the expanded service, we are implementing two programmes: we will be running the **Lifelong Links** programme, supporting young people in care to reconnect with their families so they have safe and strong family relationships as they move towards adulthood and independence. And we will be running a DfE-funded programme providing **conferences in pre-proceedings**, for children and young people on the cusp of court action and care.
- a second DfE-funded programme, this one to create a **Family Drug and Alcohol Court** in the Birmingham and Solihull Family Court. The court focuses on cases where alcohol and drugs are key factors in risk to children, where specially trained judges work differently with parents, supported by a team of drug, alcohol and child protection specialists.
- we are rolling out the Breaking the Cycle programme, now owned by the Trust, to support parents after the loss of a child through adoption or alternative permanence solution, to consider their future choices and make different decisions about and for future children.
- we will deploy **specialists in domestic abuse, substance misuse, adult mental health, to work in and with our social work teams**, supporting children's social workers to deal more effectively with these issues, bringing new, bespoke support to parents involved with the Trust, and tackling and reducing the root causes of many risks to children.
- we will further roll out the new **multi-agency Contextual Safeguarding Hub**, bringing dedicated focus and expertise to bear to address the risks to young people across the city of exploitation, 'county lines' and frequent episodes of going missing. We will explore how we can manage risk differently, in a multi-agency context, recognising that the risks young people face are increasingly in the community rather than in their families (it was the latter that the traditional child protection system was built for).
- we will continue the roll-out of the **Practice Supervisor Development Programme**, reaching every team manager in the Trust. We will design with the providers the programme for Heads of Service, ADs and Trust leaders, so that we are all equipped to work in the ways that support and enable the best possible practice on the front-line.
- we will continue to **transform our fostering service**, recruiting more carers and working with ever more Family and Friends carers coming forward to care for children. We are positioned to have a more positive Ofsted inspection of the service, and to further transform and improve beyond that.

This is an illustrative list rather than an exhaustive one. It seeks to demonstrate the breadth of change and innovation on which we are embarking, developed to reflect our ongoing determination to improve the support we provide to families, to safeguard children and to build an organisation that is the best it can be.

There is much still to do, but the Trust has established a strong platform from which to develop, improve and to innovate. Improving practice and management, better partnerships and stronger leadership all contribute to an increasingly effective organisation with vision, drive and determination to go on getting better.



Section 6

Performance

6. Performance

For the second year in a row, performance against the contract performance indicators has been strong all year. At no point since the Trust went live has the Council had to enact the rectification processes designed, in the contract, to deal with underperformance by the Trust.

In addition to the contract performance indicators, the Trust has shared its wider suite of performance measures (captured in the ChAT report), demonstrating strong and/or improving performance across the full suite of children's social care indicators. This full picture of Trust performance has been examined at both the Operational Commissioning Group and the Children's Trust Partnership Governance Group.

The Trust has implemented a new, real-time performance reporting tool, Power BI. This enables every manager, from Team Manager to Chief Executive, to view key data regarding need, demand and performance, down to individual level.

PI	Measure	Number of months where target met or within tolerances last 12 months	% where target met or within tolerances last 12 months
1	% of all referrals with a decision within 24 hours	10/12	83%
2	% of re-referrals to children's social care within 12 months	12/12	100%
3	% assessments completed within 45 working days	12/12	100%
4	% Initial CP Conferences held within 15 working days	12/12	100%
5	% of children who became the subject of a CP plan for a second or subsequent time within the last 2 years	12/12	100%
6	% of children (under 16 years) who have been looked after for 2.5 years or more, and in the same placement (or placed for adoption) continuously for 2 years or more	11/12	92%
7	% children experiencing 3 or more moves in a year	12/12	100%
8	% of children in care reviews held on time	11/12	92%
9	% of care leavers who are in education, employment, and training (EET)	12/12	100%
10	% of care leavers who are living in suitable accommodation (19-21)	12/12	100%
11	Average time between a child coming into care and being placed with an adoptive family (A1)	12/12	100%
12	Average time between the LA receiving court authority to place a child and deciding on a match (A2)	12/12	100%
13	% of agency social workers (including team managers)	12/12	100%
14	Average caseload of qualified social workers	12/12	100%
15	% of social workers who have had supervision (in month)	11/12	92%

As well as the performance measures, the Trust now has a well-embedded Quality Assurance framework, overseen by the Practice Hub. There is a wider range of performance audit undertaken, and the learning from audit feeds back into practice to drive improvement. Reports on our quality assurance work are shared at the Operational Commissioning Group.



Section 7

Governance Arrangements

7. Governance Arrangements

The Trust is owned by the Council. But its day to day operational delivery is controlled by the Trust Executive Team which is accountable to the Trust Board in order to ensure operational independence. The role of the Board is to set the strategic aims of the Trust, oversee the management of the business and hold the Executive Team to account. It is the responsible body for the performance of the Trust in terms of delivering its legal and contractual obligations and achieving outcomes for children in Birmingham.

For the period during which children's social care and family support services remain subject to Government intervention, the Chair of the Board is appointed by the Secretary of State for Education. The Council retains "reserved powers" for certain significant matters including, for example, approval of this Business Plan.

The governance arrangements for the Trust are set out in the Articles of Association and its scheme of delegation. The Service Delivery Contract details how the Trust will work with the Council to ensure the priorities and objectives specified within the contract are delivered, how decisions are made and how the Trust is held to account.

A Governance Side Agreement is in place between the DfE and the Council, describing those areas of the Trust's governance over which the DfE retains some control, or influence, whilst the Council is subject to intervention.

The Trust Board of Directors has a wide portfolio of expertise and knowledge in children's services, commercial, financial and other disciplines. The Board provides support and challenge on the direction and strategy of the Trust.

The Board consists of a chair and 7 non-executive directors. Details of current Board members are available on the Trust Website at: https://www.birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk/who_we_are.

The Trust Board has established the following committees:

- Finance and Resources.
- Performance and Quality Assurance.
- Workforce.

The governance arrangements, between Council, Trust and DfE, have worked effectively during the Trust's first two years, despite limited capacity in the Council's 'Intelligent Client Function'. The framework of Operational Commissioning Group, Trust Partnership Governance Group and routine engagement at Overview and Scrutiny, alongside regular meetings between the Trust Chief Executive and the Council Chief Executive, Director of Children's Services and Lead Member, have together proved successful in ensuring that the Council is well informed, and the Trust held accountable for delivering the right results and the necessary improvements.

The Trust's Executive Directors consist of the Chief Executive, the Director of Practice, the Director of Commissioning & Corporate Parenting and the Director of Finance & Resources. The Executive provides management oversight of operational activities of the Trust under a scheme of delegation approved by the Trust Board.



Section 8

Trust Services

8. Trust Services

The Trust is commissioned by the Council to provide the following services:

- Family Support
- CASS and MASH
- Social Work Teams
- Contextual Safeguarding Hub
- Services for Disabled Children: social work; short breaks
- Fostering and Adoption
- Residential Care
- Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, No Recourse to Public Funds, Homelessness service, Edge of Care, Family Group Conference service
- Care Leavers' Service
- Youth Offending Service
- Independent Review and Child Protection Chairs
- Support Services (including Finance, Legal Services, ICT, HR and Business Services & Support)
- Business support to the Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership

A pen portrait of our children and our service is appended.



Section 9

Our People

9. Our People

The Trust is committed to workforce development both in terms of how we reward our people and investing in learning and development. The Trust has refreshed its workforce development plan, a key element of which is to promote the Trust as “an employer of choice”. A number of key initiatives include:

- introduction of a new “value proposition” to attract and retain staff.
- introduction of a social worker apprenticeship scheme to “grow our own”.
- launch of a new training offer aligned to “Knowledge and Skills” for all the workforce.
- consideration of a wider apprenticeship scheme for other professions.
- launch of the Trust’s own “Trust in Wellbeing” initiative.
- improvements to our succession planning.

The Trust has recently updated a number of HR policies including its Code of Conduct, Sickness Absence Procedure, Capability Procedure and Grievance Procedure. Our plans are to update the remaining policies around Disciplinary Procedure.

Our management structure has been completed at Assistant Director level and will deliver real capacity to continue to drive improvement across the Trust. The number of posts filled by agency social workers continues to reduce and we aim to further reduce our reliance on agency legal staff.

Recent feedback from Ofsted as part of the Focused Visit was that morale was good. Staff feel listened to and proud to work for Birmingham Children’s Trust.



Section 10

Financial Position and Budget

10. Trust Financial Position and Budget

The Trust overspent in 2019/20 by £7m as a result of an increase in the number of children in care and high costs of residential care which reflects a sufficiency challenge in the market in the West Midlands. The overspend on placements equates to £13.2m. Mitigations applied by the Trust have reduced the net overspend figure. In response to this pressure a request was made to the Council for an additional £6.1m in 2020/21 as shown in the table below.

	£m	£m
Cost pressures		
Demand: Placement costs	12.6	
Demand: Staffing and other costs	2.3	
Remand	1.0	15.9
Demand Management		
Diversions from care	-4.0	
Assessments	-0.3	-4.3
Sub-Total		11.6
Supply side		
Supported accommodation	-1.0	
Fostering	-0.8	
Adoption	-0.7	
Residential placements	-1.4	
Sub-total		-3.9
Efficiency		
Business Support	-0.4	
Other	-0.2	
Sub-total		-0.6
Growth		
Increased tripartite contributions		-1.0
Total		6.1

Contract Sum 2020/21

As part of the Annual Review (Schedule 3 to the Contract) and the Annual Budget Setting Process, the Trust is required, by 30 October in each Contract Year, to submit the Contract Sum Proposal to the Council for consideration as part of the Council's general budget-setting process. In response the Trust submitted a proposal based on the above scenario which represents a net increase in demand pressure of £6.1m for 2020/21.

The provisional results from the triennial review of the West Midlands Pensions Fund indicate a reduction in the Trust's employer's contribution for pensions from 23.6% ("Initial Contribution Rate") to 20% ("Reduced Contribution Rate"). In accordance with the Pensions provisions (Schedule 10 to the Contract), in the event the rate is decreased, then the Council is able to retain the benefit of the decrease by means of an adjustment to the Contract sum payable (as shown below).

Notified changes in grant for 2020/21 are as follows:

- reduction in the UASC grant by £1,988,690
- increase in the Troubled Families (Transformation) grant of £750,000
- the removal of the Rough Sleepers grant of £95,000.

The final Contract Sum 2020/21 is summarised below.

	£m
Net Contract Sum (b/f) 2019/20	193.2
Permanent adjustments	
- UASC Grant	(2.0)
- Troubled Families	0.7
Sub-total (pre indexation)	191.9
Indexation	4.3
Contract changes	
- Demand pressures (net)	6.1
- Pension contribution rate	(1.2)
Total Contract Sum (payable) 2020/21	201.1

How we spend our money and how we are funded

A breakdown of how the Trust spends its money is given below.

	£m	£m
Employees		84.2
Premises		3.3
Transport		1.6
Supplies and Services		8.1
Third Party Payments		102.6
Transfer Payments		5.3
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		205.1
FUNDED BY:		
Core Contract Sum from Birmingham City Council	192.3	
Government grants paid via Birmingham City Council	8.8	201.1
Other direct grants and contributions		4.0
TOTAL INCOME		205.1

Modernisation proposals

The Trust has submitted to the Council a number of modernisation proposals which include investment in adult services specialists working in children’s social work teams and developing our own ‘in house’ supported accommodation. This proposal would involve £3.7m of capital investment to create up to 60 beds with associated staffing and maintenance costs. By replacing existing market provision with our own service, providing higher quality support at a lower cost, we can offer a better, as well as a more efficient, service to our young people.

The table below provides a summary of the Trust’s funding proposals over a five year period.

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Core Contract Sum *	192.3	192.8	193.3	193.8	194.3
Government grants paid via the Council	8.8	8.8	8.8	8.8	8.8
Total Contract Sum	201.1	201.6	202.1	202.6	203.1
Other grants and contributions	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Total Budget	205.1	205.6	206.1	206.6	207.1
Modernisation bids:					
Adult specialists working in children’s teams					
Investment – staffing and accommodation	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
Benefits – reduce demand	0.0	0.0	1.3	2.7	2.7
Net Investment/Benefit (-)	2.5	2.5	1.2	-0.2	-0.2
Supported accommodation					
Investment – staffing and property	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2
Benefits – placement costs			4.0	4.0	4.0
Net Investment/Benefit (-)	3.2	3.2	-0.8	-0.8	-0.8
Total Funding proposed including modernisation	210.8	211.3	206.5	205.6	206.1

* The Council has assumed an increase of £0.5m per annum each year from 2020/21 onwards for demographic changes. The Trust’s view is this is insufficient and will need to be reviewed as part of updated forecasts of children in care numbers.

Capital programme

The Trust has made a capital bid of £2m in relation to improvements and maintenance of Trust properties. This funding will be held by the Council as landlord, on behalf of the Trust. The replacement of the South Access Contact Centre and the remodeling of Lifford House for conferencing has been programmed for 2020/21. Proposals to replace the remaining contact centres in 2020/21 will be developed as the next priority. The table below provides a summary of the programme:

	£m	£m
Improvements – programmed works	0.5	
Improvements – contact centres	1.2	1.7
Planned maintenance		0.3
Total capital programme		2.0



Section 11

The Trust and the Council

11. The Children's Trust and the Council

The Council retains statutory accountability for children's services, and continues to provide and commission all those services for children that are not within the Trust: education support, school safeguarding, special educational needs and disabilities, school admissions and place planning, virtual school for children in care, and early years services.

Improved outcomes for children, young people and families depend upon the Council and the Trust establishing and maintaining strong and effective partnership and joint working arrangements.

These 'dependencies' have been set out in the Service Specification of the Trust Service Delivery Contract. These reflect arrangements and services for children that the Council must put in place to enable the Trust to achieve its priorities and performance targets, and include:

- ensuring all children have a school place.
- ensuring where children are not in school, support is provided to help them return to school.
- ensuring all children have 25 hours education a week.
- where children are excluded, removed from roll or otherwise prevented from attending education full-time, the Council will speedily make alternative arrangements.
- that vulnerable children between the ages of two and four have access to free day nursery provision.
- adequate housing for families in need.
- an improved early support and local offer for children with special educational needs and disabilities: this area needs to improve following the June 2018 Ofsted inspection of SEND.
- provision of the Virtual School for our children in care, ensuring children in care, adopted and 'former looked after' children make the best possible progress and receive appropriate support to enhance their potential in school. This area needs to improve following the December 2018 Ofsted inspection.
- youth services that can be mobilised to support the city's most vulnerable young people in the community.
- further education, training and access to employment support.



Section 12

Working with Partners

12. Working with Partners

The Children's Trust has played a key role in building stronger strategic and operational partnership work across the city and is represented across all of the key partnership forums. The Trust plays a prominent role in particular in the Birmingham Children's Partnership which consists of all the most senior representatives across Birmingham City Council, Birmingham Children's Trust, Birmingham and Solihull Clinical Commissioning Group, Birmingham Women and Children's Hospital, Birmingham Community Healthcare Trust, West Midlands Police, Birmingham Public Health and the Birmingham and Solihull Sustainability and Transformation Programme.

The partnership is currently in the process of building a business case for investment (circa £15m) with an associated portfolio of activity to achieve the following:

- to support immediate need and generate cashable efficiencies across the children's system.
- to reduce long-term future demand to acute services that is projected to grow.
- to address latent demand that has not been met in preceding years.
- to improve service quality through enabling activities such as culture change.

The business case incorporates new Early Help delivery, integrated commissioning, improved support to schools, better connections with community and the third sector, and more effective Transitions. The Trust is ambitious for change and will work collaboratively with the partnership to develop the vision and principles for change and stands ready to deliver new services if commissioned so to do. In particular, the Trust is working with the Council's Education and Skills and Adult Services to develop a 'Life Course' approach to service design and delivery, recognising our collective ambition is to create the conditions that allow our children and young people to receive the support they need, from their families, communities and state agencies, to grow into independent, socially and relationally connected, economically active adults. Creating more seamless services in a more connected culture will make this happen.

We believe the Trust is uniquely well-placed as a delivery vehicle with increasing skills and impact. Leadership, culture change and engagement are all critical aspects of the approach needed from the partnership.

The Children's Trust will remain an active partner in the coming years, supporting and challenging to ensure effective, integrated, strategic and operational alliances to deliver better and seamless services to children and families across the city.



Section 13

Managing Risk

13. Managing Risk

The Children's Trust actively manages risk through its risk register, which is routinely updated via its Executive and monitored through its Finance and Resources Committee. Key risks going into 2020/21 include the threat posed by and disruption arising from the Coronavirus epidemic, contract management, relationships with partners, increases in cost pressure from placements, other unexpected, unpredictable and unfunded cost pressures, Council dependencies, and ensuring the successful 'bedding in' of the new social care IT system, Eclipse.

Key strategic risks are monitored and managed through the Trust Executive, and regularly reported to the Finance and Resources Committee.

Pen portrait of our children and our service

(April 2020)



BIRMINGHAM CHILDREN'S TRUST

Our vision is to build a Trust that provides excellent social work and family support for, and with, the city's most vulnerable children, young people and families. We give our best so young people can achieve their best.

Gross budget

£197.5m

Number of employees

1,832

Child breakdown by age

Under 1	- 525 children
0-4	- 1,633 children
5-9	- 1,905 children
10-15	- 2,645 children
16-25	- 1,920 children/young people

850 care leavers

Trust working with **8,628** children and young people

89 unaccompanied asylum seekers

484 Trust foster carers offering **651** placements

12% of children left care through adoption

81 children adopted

4 disabled children's homes

32.7% youth reoffending rate (39.2% Eng & Wales)

Number of children with a child protection plan

1,295

Number of children in care

1,929

772 Number of disabled children

1,527 Children in need

2,356 Children in families supported by Family Support and/or Think Family