

For changes to project cashable benefits of £100,000 in-year or in total

Project information			
<b>Project Reference</b>	CFS1801	<b>Department</b>	CFCS
<b>Project name</b>	Fostering Development	<b>Date</b>	26-08-2020

**1. What were the project objectives and what issues have been encountered with the delivery of these?**

Our internal foster placement provision is under capacity and as a result children and young people are placed in external placements, which is not ideal for them and places pressure on the Council placements budget. The current overspend on the placements budget is £8m which includes the latest estimate of Covid-19 related costs of £6.8m (additional LAC/excess demand, specific additional/anticipated costs, and temporary additional internal residential provision. The remaining £1.2m is mainly due to general price increases observed towards the end of 2019/20, and additional support for complex cases.

Over the past two years, as part of the Remodelling Care programme, plans have been developed to increase the profile and capacity of the NCC fostering service, by improving recruitment and retention and resulting in a net increase of 50 CYP placed with an internal foster carer over the current MTFS. This will provide better placement choice for CYP, will reduce costs, and will promote NCC as an exemplar of best practice in fostering.

Members have committed to invest in the service so that fees can compete with independent fostering agencies and recruitment approaches are modern, relevant and effective.

Key deliverables so far are:

- The development of a targeted and robust marketing plan, including increased information events across the County and a visible presence in countywide publications – as a result enquiries and assessments have increased significantly and a third monthly approval panel is needed to manage the increase
- The establishment of a dedicated recruitment & assessment team which has been operational since October 2019 – this team has conducted the recruitment events and managed potential carers through the assessment process in a streamlined and efficient manner, in spite of the limitations imposed around face to face meetings during lockdown. Approvals are currently 75% up on the previous years' figures. The current forecast expects 41 new foster carers by the end of the calendar year (note that these will be offset by deregistrations however).
- Improvements to the fostering offer in order to attract and retain foster carers. This has included an increase and simplification of fees, better communication about the financial benefit for foster carers by way of clarity on fees, tax and

other benefits, and new discounts for carers to make their income go further. Since these improvements have been made one significant success has been that not one of our foster carers has left NCC to work for an independent agency; on the contrary, we have had an independent agency foster carer come to work for NCC.

The original proposal was based on having the improvements above in place from April 2019, but delays occurred which put the start date back. The business case took longer to develop than was expected and so CYP approval was not obtained until July 2019. It was anticipated that the service could catch up with the business case but delays in recruitment of the assessment social workers meant that we didn't see an upturn in enquiries and assessments until October 2019. This meant that the forecast number of new foster carers were not recruited as quickly as the business case anticipated; however, the small increase that were recruited offset a larger proportion of deregistrations than has been seen in preceding years, which put the department in a better position than it would otherwise have been.

The Covid-19 lockdown has also had a significant effect on the throughput of potential carers through the assessment process, as there is a statutory duty to conduct face-to-face assessments of carers in their homes, which the service was unable to do.

## **2. What efforts have been made to mitigate those issues and what has been the outcome?**

Although recruitment took longer than expected the service deployed existing Supervising Social Workers to absorb some of the increase in enquiries to try to increase throughput, but this was an interim rather than permanent solution as SSWs had to continue their normal duties as well. This approach meant that the increase in enquiries which began from

The service worked with Comms & Marketing colleagues to develop strong messaging and ran this out as a drip-feed campaign to build interest in becoming a foster carer, which developed into an increase in enquiries processed once the Recruitment & Assessment team was in place in November.

The Recruitment & Assessment team has developed creative ways to conduct initial assessments and home tours using video technology and have therefore ensured that potential carers have been moved along the assessment pipeline as quickly as possible in the circumstances, pending a final face to face assessment.

## **3. What change is being requested (describe the proposed alternative way of delivering the savings) and what is the impact on the cashable benefits (profile and total)?**

Due to the delays described above cashable budget savings have not been achieved this financial year and it is proposed that the savings profile is moved back by one year.

The Business Change Analyst team has conducted a review of the enquiry and assessment pipeline and has confirmed that the original savings are achievable, given

the upward trend in enquiries and the speed at which potential carers are being approved.

The overall budget saving remains unchanged.

Double click in embedded spreadsheet to enter details of proposed changes

Year	Expected	Revised	Change
2019/20	-169,000	-169,000	0
2020/21	283,000	0	-283,000
2021/22	357,000	283,000	-74,000
2022/23	0	357,000	357,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>471,000</b>	<b>471,000</b>	<b>0</b>

**4. Describe any wider impacts on other programmes projects as a result of the proposed change?**

Newton proposals with regards to fostering may overlap with this project, although that would have been the case even if the savings had not slipped. Newton proposes that more internal foster carers can be recruited; these would have to be over and above those being recruited as part of the Fostering Development project.

**5. What lessons can be learned from this change (these will be collated within the wider organisation programme lessons log).**

Lesson Description	Learning Point
We thought that we would be able to recruit social workers into the Recruitment and Assessment team more quickly than we did, but there was less interest than was expected and recruitment took more than 4 months	Need to factor in difficulties in recruitment, and allow adequate time for teams to be trained and up to speed.
The business case changed slightly for each week it was delayed in getting to CYP Committee, which resulted in a catch-up situation	There is a difficult balance between proposing adequate savings within the MTFS timescales and the reality of having lost ground due to delays which could result in the savings budget decreasing.

**6. Recommendation**

Corporate Leadership Team is asked to agree the change request as set out.

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**Position:** Programme Manager

**Department:** Programmes and Projects Team, Chief Executives Department.

**7. Comments on the impact of the change request on the in-year budget and the MTFS (to be completed by Finance)**

**8. Comments on the impact of the change on the wider Transformation Portfolio etc (to be completed by PMO)**

**9. Background Papers**

<b>CLT - Decision Record (INSERT DATE)</b>	
<b>Approval / Rejection Options</b>	<b>Conditions / Commentary</b>
Change Request Approved	
Change Request Rejected	
Change Request Deferred	

To be submitted to [PMO@nottsc.gov.uk](mailto:PMO@nottsc.gov.uk). The submitter will receive an acknowledgement of receipt and liaison will take place about scheduling on the CLT agenda.

**Change Request to be presented at CLT by Sponsor or designated representative.**