

2013/14 Budget - Growth Proposal

Service: Through Care Service

Proposal Number: 2

Description of Proposal:

Increase Social Worker staffing of Through Care Service in the light of increased LAC numbers.

In August 2011 the Through Care Service was restructured in order to produce savings for the Department, which meant reducing the Through Care Teams from three to two thus losing a Team Manager's post and two social work posts.

The looked after population at that time was 220, which was manageable within the restructure. Since that time the numbers of looked after children/young people has steadily increased, with the current number being 254 as at 27/07/2012. This level has been consistent since November 2011 and is also in line with the national trend of increases in the looked after population as reported by CAF/CASS who have recorded a rise in care proceedings over the last year of 10%.

The average caseload prior to the restructure was 15 cases per social worker. This has now increased to at least 20 cases per social worker where the social worker is fully qualified and experienced but 4 of the 15 social workers must be kept on the reduced caseloads now required for newly qualified staff.

The proposed growth figure also includes competency payment.

Proposed Growth

Proposed growth in 2013/14 £'000s	Proposed growth in 2013/14 FTE Staff	Proposed growth in full year £'000s	Proposed growth in full year FTE Staff
	1	£43	1

	2013/14 £'000s	Full Year £'000s
People	-	-
Property	-	-
Third Party		
Infrastructure/Kit	-	-

Base Budget 2012/13

	£'000s
Expenditure	

Employees	
Other Direct Running Costs (Premises, Transport and Supplies)	
Third Party Payments	
Transfer Payments	
Capital Financing Costs	
Support Services Costs	
Gross Expenditure	
Income	
Sales, Fees and Charges	
Grant and External Contributions	
Support Services Income	
Gross Income	
Net Expenditure	
Base Budget 2012/13 Full time Equivalent Staff	

Recent Changes to Base Budget

	£'000s
Growth approved in the 2012/13 Base Budget	0
Savings approved in the 2012/13 Base Budget	0

Impact of Proposal on public / services	Statutory duties require every LAC to be carefully attended to by an individual social worker.
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Impact of Proposal on performance	Social worker caseloads must be managed carefully in order to achieve high standards and each individual child's circumstances amalgamate to the Council's overall performance as a corporate parent.
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Impact of Proposal on staff	Relief of workload pressures.
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Practical requirements regarding implementation and timetable	These staff are required as soon as possible. Please note that economies have previously been made on the social work staffing of Through Care but now LAC numbers have grown – in Thurrock and across the country.
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Equalities Impact	LAC are a disadvantaged group whose needs are legally defined and legally required to be quality assured by the Independent Reviewing Officer attached to each child or young person.
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2013/14 Budget - Growth Proposal

Service: Family Support

Proposal Number: 3

Description of Proposal

A request to increase Social Worker staffing capacity for the Family Support Service by 2 Social Workers. Currently, there have been 2 additional temporary social workers added to the service in order to cope with the increased service demand.

In August 2011 the Family Support Service was restructured in order to produce savings for the Department. This resulted in losing two social workers per team, totalling a reduction on 10 social work practitioners. These posts had not been funded and contributed to overspend issues.

The current trend in referrals has seen an increase in the complexity of referrals, thus resulting in the current capacity of working with CIN cases being stretched. The data on referral trends in Thurrock is difficult to present as enquiries for social work help have been managed in different ways over the years. Historically, every enquiry for help (referred to as "contact" in social work terminology) was accepted for attention and thus was given the description of "referral". In September 2010, the LGID Peer Review advised that the Council should prioritise the most serious cases, and which was a process that had already begun. The Unannounced Inspection of Referrals and Assessments in November 2010 confirmed and required this approach. Therefore the service now carefully considers every "contact" and it becomes a "referral" when it is agreed that there should be action taken from the social work teams.

Broadly speaking, the number of contacts which the whole service received each year is as follows:

2009 – 2010	7,775	
2010 – 2011	7,837	
2011 – 2012	11,022	Of which, 9,384 were "contacts" to the Initial Response Team who accepted 1137 "referrals"

The referrals which were acted upon were as follows:

2009 – 2010	2,477	
2010 – 2011	1,554	
2011 – 2012	1,392	

Cases in the Family Support Services are either child protection or children in need. Statistically, there is a comparatively low level of CIN cases that are receiving services in Thurrock. Lack of early identification and intervention at this point may indicate the nature of the complexities reflected in the referrals as Intervention at the CIN stage can help in addressing issues and concerns, thus helping reduce need for more intrusive interventions such as CP Plans and Removal. This area of work will be developed as the Council develops the Early Offer of Help but the need for social workers to work with high-level CIN will still remain. These are high risk cases.

Alongside, the number of Initial Child Protection conferences increased slightly in 2011/12 on the previous year continuing the rise over the past 6 years. The rate per 10,000 remains at 65 which is around 35% higher than the national average for 2011 (48). Thurrock is working a much higher proportion of child protection cases than other authorities.

Proposed Growth

Proposed Growth in 2012/13 £'000s	Proposed Growth in 2012/13 FTE Staff	Proposed Growth in full year £'000s	Proposed Growth in full year FTE Staff
£25,697	0	£88,545	5

	2012/13 £'000s	Full Year £'000s 2013/14
People	25,697	88,545
Property	-	-
Third Party		
Infrastructure/Kit	-	-

Base Budget 2012/13

	£'000s
Expenditure	
Employees	
Other Direct Running Costs (Premises, Transport and Supplies)	
Third Party Payments	
Transfer Payments	
Capital Financing Costs	
Support Services Costs	
Gross Expenditure	
Income	
Sales, Fees and Charges	
Grant and External Contributions	
Support Services Income	

Gross Income	
Net Expenditure	
Base Budget 2011/12 Full time Equivalent Staff	

Recent Changes to Base Budget

	£'000s
Growth approved in the 2012/13 Base Budget	0
Savings approved in the 2012/13 Base Budget	0

Impact of Proposal on public / services	Statutory duties for child protection of children in need are binding and national. In Thurrock, demand is high and we are currently working with increased demand for services and fewer children in need cases than other local authorities. Referrals = 377/10,000 in Thurrock and 555/10,000 nationally. The overall profile of disadvantage and stress experienced by children in need is comparative with the circumstances of children who receive child protection intervention.
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Impact of Proposal on performance	Social worker caseloads must be managed carefully in order to achieve high standards and for the Thurrock service offer to compare with other local authorities. Currently, caseloads are rising, which is extremely undesirable.
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Impact of Proposal on staff	With the availability of additional social workers in each team, this can help with the relief of workload pressures and the ability to focus on positive outcomes for the children by undertaking high quality work, better achievement on KPIs and overall help in creating a stable workforce (staff retention) thus savings in the long term.
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Practical requirements regarding implementation and timetable	Social Worker recruitment to these much needed posts is a pressure – this is the “front line” wing of the service where recruitment is most difficult.
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Equalities Impact	Social work intervention is usually to the most disadvantaged groups and poverty, isolation and poor mental health are frequent descriptions of parents, causing further impact on children’s lives.
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2013/14 Budget – Growth Proposal

Service: Adoption

Proposal Number: 4

Description of Proposal – Increase in Budget for Adoption Support and Special Guardianship Support Payments

These two budget headings (CA071 – 2761 and CA071 – 2760) have come under increasing pressure over the last few years, particularly as Courts have expanded the use of Special Guardianship Orders as an outcome from Care Proceedings.

In Thurrock applications for SGOs have been supported as a means to enable children to cease to be looked after, which has helped us achieve one of our key objectives of facilitating permanency for children. Where applications are from existing carers for children, Thurrock policy has been to continue to maintain financial support at the level of the fostering Boarding Out Allowance until their eighteenth birthday. Whilst expensive, this produces a secure outcome for the child and reduces Thurrock's commitment of time and resources on keeping them within the care system.

Expenditure over the last three years for CA071 – 2761 has grown significantly:

2011-12: £441,263.38.

2010-11: £296,052.36.

2009-10: £178,339.70

For 2011-12 the budget was £348,469.

Unfortunately it was not possible to predict this level of increase, and therefore budgets have fallen behind, leading to overspend. Whilst we cannot foresee exactly how many children might come into care in the next year for whom this may be a viable outcome, we estimate some growth in numbers of arrangements attracting these payments. More predictably, some increases will accrue as children grow older and enter the next age related Boarding Out Allowance level. As we are currently overstretched on this budget close scrutiny will be needed of any new proposed arrangements, but we are likely to need a budget in the region of £500k for 2013/13 and beyond. This would entail an increase of around £150k against existing levels.

Regarding Adoption Support Payments (CA071 – 2760) the situation is slightly more predictable as arrangements are likely to arise from well established care plans. Whilst a small number of applicants to adopt request some time limited financial support, this is not particularly problematic. Greater financial pressures arise for children with a long term plan for adoption for whom we have not been able to find adopters through "normal" means. This generally applies to siblings, children with particular healthcare needs, or slightly older children. In these instances if an existing foster carer comes forward to adopt the child we generally regard this as the best achievable outcome for the child, and hence continue to provide long term financial support at the same level as for fostering allowances.

As above, this in itself involves a reduction of expenditure for the social work attention required by law for children who are looked after.

Expenditure on Adoption Support Payments for the last three years has been:

2011-12: £85,712.36.
 2010-11: £36,563.32.
 2009-10: £34,157.80.

Some of the increase has been offset by a reduction in Adoption Allowances (which was the previous legal structure, where we still have some “legacy” agreements which will expire in the next few years).

In the immediate future we can foresee seven children, for whom the identified plan is adoption by three different carers. All are children who have waited a long time for adopters, which would not have been possible any other way. In some instances income from fostering has been the primary source of income to date. We estimate that the additional cost of the new Adoption Support Allowances will be £99k each year from 2013/14.

As with the SGOs, savings will arise from not having to maintain the Looked After status of the children.

In both cases additional savings will ensue in the longer term, as these children will not be entitled to support from the Aftercare Team when they reach 18.

Proposed Growth

Proposed Growth in 2013/14 £'000s	Proposed Growth in 2013/14 FTE Staff	Proposed Growth in full year £'000s	Proposed Growth in full year FTE Staff
SGOs £100K Adoption 99 Total £249k	0		0

	2013/14 £'000s	Full Year £'000s
People	-	-
Property	-	-
Third Party		
Infrastructure/Kit	-	-

Base Budget 2012/13

	£'000s
Expenditure	
Employees	
Other Direct Running Costs (Premises, Transport and Supplies)	
Third Party Payments	
Transfer Payments	
Capital Financing Costs	
Support Services Costs	
Gross Expenditure	
Income	
Sales, Fees and Charges	
Grant and External Contributions	
Support Services Income	
Gross Income	
Net Expenditure	
Base Budget 2012/13 Full time Equivalent Staff	

Recent Changes to Base Budget

	£'000s
Growth approved in the 2012/13 Base Budget	0
Savings approved in the 2012/13 Base Budget	0

Impact of Proposal on public / services	Continued success in achieving permanency options for children
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Impact of Proposal on performance	Improved financial planning for this budget.
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Impact of Proposal on staff	Confidence in resources being available when needed
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Practical requirements regarding implementation and timetable	Nothing new
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Equalities Impact	Being a looked after child can mean a child is denied normal family life and this budget enables as many children as possible to become legally connected to ordinary parent figures
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2013/14 Budget - Growth Proposal

Service: Fostering

Proposal Number: 5

Description of Proposal

Increase fostering allowances to a level comparable with neighbouring local authorities so as to protect retention of experienced foster-carers and improve recruitment.

The in-house fostering service fulfils a central role in ensuring the Council can meet its Corporate Parenting responsibilities, by finding and maintaining appropriate placements for Looked After Children.

Thurrock has continued to perform well in maintaining a high proportion of children in foster placements. (75% as of 21.6.12). Over recent years Thurrock has also managed to place a high proportion of these with in-house carers. However there has been a significant shift in the balance of in-house/IFA placements, exacerbated by the rise in the number of Looked After Children 2011-2012. This change has led inevitably to increased demands upon the External Placements Budget, which was significantly overspent for 2011-12, and is likely to be severely strained for 2012-13.

Maintaining and extending our pool of Thurrock Carers is essential if we are to avoid over-reliance on the independent sector, and the financial consequences of this.

Equally importantly, maintaining our in-house provision ensures we are able to protect key links for children, with schools, extended families, and other critical networks, as well as providing other benefits, such as reducing travel time for allocated social workers, ensuring foster carers are facilitated to attend training, and making sure Court directed supervised contact can take place.

However attracting new applicants to become foster carers for Thurrock has been difficult, despite significant recruitment activity. The single factor which has been cited by existing carers as a barrier to new applicants choosing to become foster carers for Thurrock is a widening differential between the financial payments being offered both by other local authorities and the independent sector. Financial support is divided into two elements, the age appropriate Boarding Out Allowance, which covers the actual costs incurred in caring for the child/young person, and the "reward" element. Broadly speaking Thurrock has remained competitive on the Boarding Out element, having decided over the last two years to observe the Fostering Network recommended payment levels.

Exploration of local competitors has been undertaken, and whilst direct comparison can sometimes be difficult as all authorities have different "schemes" of payment, we accept that Thurrock has become less attractive than neighbouring authorities in terms of the reward element. In particular Essex have significantly revised their "offer" to carers in September 2011, and as they (and the independent sector) are our main local competitors for potential applicants we need to improve the attractiveness of Thurrock, where the reward element of payments has remained

unchanged since 2009.

A significant revision of our existing structure is therefore proposed, which will be presented, along with comparative data from other authorities and the independent sector, in a fuller report. We do need however to plan for increasing the number of placements available, and this has been built into the estimated cost of the changes proposed, which are calculated to require an additional £307,000 in the full year. In order to reduce expenditure, it is proposed that this is reduced by arranging mid-year implementation.

Proposed Growth

Proposed Growth in 2013/14 £'000s	Proposed Growth in 2013/14 FTE Staff	Proposed Growth in full year £'000s	Proposed Growth in full year FTE Staff
£257	0		0

	2013/14 £'000s	Full Year £'000s
People	-	-
Property	-	-
Third Party		
Infrastructure/Kit	-	-

Base Budget 2012/13

	£'000s
Expenditure	
Employees	
Other Direct Running Costs (Premises, Transport and Supplies)	
Third Party Payments	
Transfer Payments	
Capital Financing Costs	
Support Services Costs	
Gross Expenditure	
Income	
Sales, Fees and Charges	
Grant and External Contributions	
Support Services Income	
Gross Income	
Net Expenditure	
Base Budget 2012/13 Full time Equivalent Staff	

Recent Changes to Base Budget

	£'000s
Growth approved in the 2012/13 Base Budget	0

Impact of Proposal on public / services	Thurrock fostering allowances are lower than those paid by many other local authorities in London and neighbouring authorities, as well as those offered by Agencies in the Independent Sector. The search for and retention of foster-carers is a key driver for services for both quality and financial reasons.
Impact of Proposal on performance	Recently Thurrock has had more in-house fostering capacity than many local authorities but this is in jeopardy if we are not competitive with others. We aim to make Thurrock Fostering the Agency of choice for potential applicants in this area.
Impact of Proposal on staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Relief of pressure whereby early enquirers to foster choose to go elsewhere and current foster carers would be discouraged from leaving to go elsewhere ○ An increase in in-house Foster Carers would increase the workloads of staff in the Fostering Service slightly, but this would be offset by the reduced time spent accessing Independent sector placements.
Practical requirements regarding implementation and timetable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Immediate potential for good press on recruitment. Otherwise, only changed tasks are financial arrangements for carers.
Equalities Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There is a national shortage of foster-carers which affects Thurrock and our foster carer workforce is predominantly white, as has been recognised in the Single Equality Duty Action Plan. An improved payment system may enable more local people to come forward.

2013/14 Budget - Growth Proposal

Service: Placement Service

Proposal Number: 6

Description of Proposal – Placement Purchasing

External placements need to be purchased for the following reasons:

Children have particularly high needs for personal care packages such as multi-disciplinary provision for disabled children

Residential care, i.e. highly staffed supervision of young people who have another personal or psychological profile of high needs and may have to be protected from other young people and/or the public and therefore cannot immediately be placed in foster care

Children need a fostering placement and the in-house service is fully occupied so additional capacity has to be purchased in the private sector.

Assessed need of young people in Thurrock is increasing our call for specialist placements and the increased numbers of children in care (both locally and across the country) is impacting on the limited supply of fostering placements. The numbers of children in care in Thurrock have increased to 253 and the proportion of young people needing residential care has increased. The rise in expenditure needs a careful plan to maximise every form of cost reduction and to avoid any further financial uncertainty. A new post of Social Work Advisor on Resources will be staffed as from September and a separate application is being made for growth on the level of fostering allowance paid by the Council. Previous Star Chamber agreement has been given to increasing the numbers of highly specialised in-house foster carers in the Therapeutic Fostering Team but no increase has been achieved. As for all fostering recruitment, the Council is competing with other fostering organisations and this competition is most marked for this exceptionally high need group.

The pressures covered by this budget are not so much for disabled children as for those children needing residential care and mainstream fostering. Thurrock is not unique in facing this financial problem but we need an effective plan for the future.

Proposed Saving

This budget has a history of over spending and under funding which creates an annual problem.

This proposal is for an increase to the External Placements Budget which realistically meets the service's needs.

Proposed Growth

Proposed Growth in 2013/14 £'000s	Proposed Growth in 2013/14 FTE Staff	Proposed Growth in full year £'000s	Proposed Growth in full year FTE Staff
£3M	0		0

	2013/14 £'000s	Full Year £'000s
People	-	-
Property	-	-
Third Party		
Infrastructure/Kit	-	-

Base Budget 2012/13

	£'000s
Expenditure	
Employees	
Other Direct Running Costs (Premises, Transport and Supplies)	
Third Party Payments	
Transfer Payments	
Capital Financing Costs	
Support Services Costs	
Gross Expenditure	
Income	
Sales, Fees and Charges	
Grant and External Contributions	
Support Services Income	
Gross Income	
Net Expenditure	
Base Budget 2012/13 Full time Equivalent Staff	

Recent Changes to Base Budget

	£'000s
Growth approved in the 2012/13 Base Budget	0
Savings approved in the 2012/13 Base Budget	0

Impact of Proposal on public / services	Placements are being purchased currently so this bid is being made to achieve financial clarity and improve planning.
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Impact of Proposal on performance	As above, this application will assist staff to feel confident which can be planned as far as possible. However, there will always be a level of unpredictability.
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Impact of Proposal on staff	As above, staff are confident that the Council will support all children needing placements so the impact will be limited.
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Practical requirements regarding implementation and timetable	These will be at a planning level only
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Equalities Impact	Children and young people who are looked after are a generally disadvantaged group and there has to be careful monitoring in order to ensure that there is not over representation of any particular group with protected characteristics, such as race. So far as is known, there is no over representation of any protected characteristic group within the Thurrock population of looked after children and young people.
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2013/14 Budget - Growth Proposal

Service: Family Support

Proposal Number: 8

Description of Proposal

Appointment of Senior Practitioner to undertake Community Based Assessments

Introduction

Following agreement from the Eastern Safeguarding Project (ESP) funding was agreed for Thurrock and Southend LAs to develop a regional model of community based assessments for families. This is to be based on the model developed by Bath & North East Somerset Council adapted to suit the particular needs of the two LAs.

The model devised by Bath and NE Somerset has been subject to performance monitoring and review since implementation in 2008 and has received OFSTED approval

The objective of this report is to explain the Community Based Assessment model, the benefits of its adoption, outline work undertaken to date and provide a summary of work to be progressed prior to piloting the project in June 2012, including matters specific to Thurrock.

Why Community Based Assessments

Families currently subject to care proceedings are required to undergo various assessment processes in respect of their parenting capacity and family function. For some families where there are a variety of particular issues, such as mental health, learning difficulties, drug and alcohol misuse, additional external assessments will be required. In a number of cases Court will request residential provision. Inevitably, such provision is not always based within the local community. The associated cost to LA's for externally commissioned expert reports and residential provision can be exorbitant. Better use may be made by providing for assessments to be made within the community and using *in-house* resources. The aim of Community Based Assessment is also to reduce the stress experienced by families undergoing assessment and provide opportunities for them to maximise their own resources within their local community.

What is a Community Based Assessment Model

The Community Based Assessment model is an alternative to residential provision and the need to commission external expert reports. It is intended to maximise parent/child contact within a multi-agency modular approach, employing local resources, to assess parenting capacity, within the family's local community. It is also intended to cope with families experiencing a variety of problems where different specialists are involved, such as:

- For those families who experience problematic drug and alcohol misuse
- Where domestic abuse is prevalent.
- Where mental health issues are apparent.
- Where parents have an IQ below 70 and require additional support.
- Where a parent has a physical disability.

It is intended that the assessment will take place either in the family home or in a designated environment that can, as far as possible, replicate a family home. It will require parent/s to undertake common tasks, meal planning, tidying up, washing, playing and communicating between the child and adults.

An essential feature of the Bath Model is the role of a Senior Practitioner whose task is to oversee and coordinate the contributions of the various specialist workers involved as well as undertaking the parenting assessment. The Bath model emphasises the need for the Senior Practitioner, whilst employed by the LA, to be managed and supervised by a Third Sector provider. This is seen as necessary to ensure the confidence of the Court and avoid the adversarial nature that is sometimes associated with Children's Services within the Court arena.

Main benefits of the adoption of this model:

- Family remain within their own community
- Local agencies engaged at assessment and providing continuity
- Cost effective and control over quality of assessments
- Reducing delay
- Transparency for parents
- Development of preferred provider list and quality assurance tool.

Proposed Growth

Proposed Growth in 2013/14 £'000s	Proposed Growth in 2013/14 FTE Staff	Proposed Growth in full year £'000s	Proposed Growth in full year FTE Staff
55	0		0

	2013/14 £'000s	Full Year £'000s
People	-	-
Property	-	-
Third Party		
Infrastructure/Kit	-	-

Base Budget 2012/13

	£'000s
Expenditure	
Employees	
Other Direct Running Costs (Premises, Transport and Supplies)	
Third Party Payments	
Transfer Payments	
Capital Financing Costs	
Support Services Costs	
Gross Expenditure	
Income	
Sales, Fees and Charges	
Grant and External Contributions	
Support Services Income	
Gross Income	
Net Expenditure	
Base Budget 2011/12 Full time Equivalent Staff	

Recent Changes to Base Budget

	£'000s
Growth approved in the 2012/13 Base Budget	0
Savings approved in the 2012/13 Base Budget	0

Impact of Proposal on public / services	To reduce the number of residential assessments requested by the court and other decision making bodies, leading to a reduced level of spend on costly and time consuming assessments.
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Impact of Proposal on performance	Delivery of integrated models of assessment within appropriate timescales. Assessments will follow more closely the true representation of the child/family in the community and therefore have a greater integrity and improved basis for future planning and reduce drift for children subject to care proceedings.
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Impact of Proposal on staff	Confidence of social workers in deploying CBA model and a more realistic assessment of carers' ability to manage without intensively monitored settings or programmes.
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Practical requirements regarding implementation and timetable	In addition to the appointment of a senior practitioner to undertake parenting capacity assessments and coordinate reports received from specialist workers additional funding is requested to ensure that the post is managed off line by third sector provider.
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Equalities Impact	Community based assessment will meet the needs of the most disadvantaged families living in Thurrock, enabling them to remain within their community and continue to access local provision and support networks.
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Draft Business case template for savings

Portfolio Education and Children's Social Care	HOS Roger Harris	Budget Home to school transport
Budget Code	AA290	
Description of service or information required	Home to School Transport – This is the subject of a more detailed briefing paper that is being prepared for the Chief Executive covering our existing legal obligations and various options over reducing denominational transport.	
Accountable cost		
Savings 13/14	200k – this is the figure in the MTFS but relates to the Post 16 transport proposal.	
Implications		