

## Blackpool Council – Children’s Services

### Revenue summary - budget, actual and forecast:

FUNCTIONS OF THE SERVICE	BUDGET	EXPENDITURE			VARIANCE	2022/23 (UNDER)/OVER SPEND B/FWD £000
	2023/24					
	ADJUSTED CASH LIMITED BUDGET £000	EXPENDITURE APR - OCT £000	PROJECTED SPEND £000	FORECAST OUTTURN £000	F/CAST FULL YEAR VAR. (UNDER) / OVER £000	
<b>CHILDREN'S SERVICES</b>						
<b>NET EXPENDITURE</b>						
LOCAL SCHOOLS BUDGET - ISB	20,112	12,614	7,498	20,112	-	-
LOCAL SCHOOLS BUDGET - NON DELEGATED	281	161	72	233	(48)	-
EDUCATION	27,385	9,530	17,903	27,433	48	-
EARLY HELP FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES	182	106	76	182	-	-
BUSINESS SUPPORT AND RESOURCES	9,330	4,736	4,594	9,330	-	-
DEDICATED SCHOOL GRANT	(57,977)	(35,367)	(22,610)	(57,977)	-	-
CARRY FORWARD OF DSG UNDER/(OVER) SPEND	687	-	687	687	-	-
<b>TOTAL DSG FUNDED SERVICES</b>	-	<b>(8,220)</b>	<b>8,220</b>	-	-	-
CHILDREN'S SERVICES DEPRECIATION	1,748	-	1,748	1,748	-	-
EDUCATION	1,933	2,087	(151)	1,936	3	-
EARLY HELP FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES	5,917	1,851	4,046	5,897	(20)	-
CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE	58,883	34,971	29,597	64,568	5,685	-
BUSINESS SUPPORT AND RESOURCES	(149)	1,195	(565)	630	779	-
LOCAL SERVICES SUPPORT GRANT	(18)	-	(18)	(18)	-	-
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT GRANT	(166)	-	(166)	(166)	-	-
<b>TOTAL COUNCIL FUNDED SERVICES</b>	<b>68,148</b>	<b>40,104</b>	<b>34,491</b>	<b>74,595</b>	<b>6,447</b>	-
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>68,148</b>	<b>31,884</b>	<b>42,711</b>	<b>74,595</b>	<b>6,447</b>	-

### Commentary on the key issues:

#### Directorate Summary – basis

The Revenue summary (above) lists the latest outturn projection for each individual service within the Children’s Services Directorate against their respective, currently approved, revenue budget. Forecast outturns are based upon actual financial performance for the first 7 months of 2023/24 together with predictions of performance, anticipated pressures and efficiencies in the remainder of the financial year, all of which have been agreed with each Head of Service.

#### Children’s Social Care

The full-year impact of the Children’s Social Care pressures as at M7 2022/23 has been rightsized as part of the Corporate Medium Term Financial Plan, equating to an additional budget of £5,221k allocated in 2023/24. However, Children’s Social Care Placements is forecasting an overspend against this increased budget of £5,685k, mainly due to new-to-care placements being higher than those exiting care and the additional support required following the breakdown of high-cost placements. The actual number of residential placements as at 31 October 2023 is 70 with this forecast to reduce to 68 by 31 March 2024, whereas the plan suggested there would be 66 as at 31 October 2023 reducing to 60 by the end of March 2024.

However, the number of Children in Care continues to reduce and currently sits at 541 children. This brings Blackpool from a rate of 218 per 0-17 10,000 population to 194. The ambition is to bring ourselves in line with comparator Local Authorities over the next couple of years and we are confident that this ambition will be realised. Officers have seen this reduction as a result of reduced entry into

care, and increased numbers exiting our care system. Within the cohort of Children Looked After, the Council has had a higher than national average of children in residential placements. Residential settings, for most children, are not the optimum placement and these children do not usually have the same degree of positive outcomes as children in foster placements, or family placements for example. Residential placements are costly, with unit costs rising year on year by 14.1%. We have seen movement in the numbers of residential placements, from 84 to 74 as a result of a focussed, ongoing piece of work led by our newly recruited Head of Service for Supporting our Children. We have reviewed a number of care plans and as a result children have been moved from residential settings to settings that better meet their needs, always ensuring their safety and individual needs are at the forefront when planning.

The service has additionally seen a reduction in agency social work staff during the last 12-18 months. In 2021/2022 the service had rates of up to 40% agency staff in some teams. A refreshed Workforce Strategy, overseen by a Workforce Board, chaired monthly by the Director of Childrens Services, has seen a reduction of agency staff to under 15% across the social care teams. The national average is now 17% and regionally the rate is much higher. The last set of regional data put Blackpool at the lowest for agency rates. Officers continue to monitor this closely in a challenging and competitive market.

### **Dedicated Schools Grant Funded Services**

The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is the funding stream that supports the Schools Budget, which includes amounts that are devolved through the Individual School Budget (ISB), together with centrally-retained pupil-related services as listed in the revenue summary. Any under or overspends against services funded by the DSG will be carried forward to 2024/25 and, in the case of overspends, become the first call on the grant in that year.

### **Business Support and Resources**

Business Support and Resources is forecasting an overspend of £779k. There was an additional Children's Services savings target of £1,924k, of which, only £1,165k is anticipated to be met this financial year, leaving a budget gap of £759k. There is expected to be a £20k overspend on staffing.

### **Summary of the Children's Services financial position**

As at the end of October 2023 the Children's Services Directorate is forecasting an overspend of £6,447k for the financial year to March 2024.

### **Budget Holder – Victoria Gent, Director of Children's Services**

Children's Social Care Trends

Date	External Placements Projection						Internal Fostering			Supported Accommodation			LAC number	SGO	
	Residential			Fostering inc M&B			Number	% of LAC	£ per placement	Number	% of LAC	£ per placement	No.	Number	£ per placement
	Number	% of LAC	£ per placement	Number	% of LAC	£ per placement									
Jun-13	41	8%	111,596	72	15%	36,202	263	53%	11,887	16	3%	no data	492	no data	
Sep-13	33	7%	111,523	66	14%	35,667	272	58%	11,908	17	4%	no data	472	no data	
Dec-13	30	7%	117,073	69	15%	36,560	260	57%	11,828	17	4%	no data	459	no data	
Mar-14	27	6%	118,473	64	14%	34,058	248	56%	11,757	15	3%	no data	443	no data	
Jun-14	25	5%	102,561	74	16%	35,928	250	55%	12,833	18	4%	no data	457	no data	
Sep-14	21	5%	121,210	75	16%	37,655	237	51%	12,570	27	6%	no data	462	no data	
Dec-14	18	4%	124,281	70	15%	38,760	243	53%	12,474	23	5%	no data	459	no data	
Mar-15	23	5%	128,868	73	16%	40,155	244	53%	12,374	19	4%	no data	463	no data	
Jun-15	25	6%	147,777	74	17%	40,625	219	50%	12,541	20	5%	no data	440	no data	
Sep-15	25	6%	142,934	73	16%	40,040	225	50%	12,549	16	4%	no data	450	no data	
Dec-15	27	6%	145,196	70	16%	41,243	217	49%	12,428	17	4%	no data	442	no data	
Mar-16	29	6%	146,120	69	15%	42,215	257	56%	12,453	22	5%	no data	462	no data	
Jun-16	34	7%	157,136	77	16%	42,145	259	53%	12,630	28	6%	38,608	493	230	5,472
Sep-16	32	6%	169,996	84	17%	42,750	254	51%	12,688	27	5%	41,376	502	240	5,582
Dec-16	36	7%	175,954	89	18%	43,038	258	52%	12,857	28	6%	41,037	499	245	5,562
Mar-17	44	8%	179,669	103	19%	43,502	269	51%	12,872	26	5%	42,416	529	249	5,555
Jun-17	49	9%	151,450	100	18%	40,933	272	50%	13,227	26	5%	60,946	546	258	5,576
Sep-17	35	7%	161,487	95	18%	40,991	270	51%	13,213	36	7%	57,928	528	267	5,383
Dec-17	43	8%	162,623	103	19%	41,277	272	50%	13,169	36	7%	58,358	539	277	5,281
Mar-18	44	8%	165,935	98	18%	41,099	273	51%	13,116	30	6%	55,728	534	286	5,109
Jun-18	45	8%	164,794	97	18%	40,083	297	54%	13,403	24	4%	48,006	554	320	5,512
Sep-18	45	8%	159,388	97	17%	40,425	302	54%	13,441	28	5%	46,073	557	308	5,294
Dec-18	47	8%	169,287	99	17%	40,227	305	53%	13,430	33	6%	46,167	572	332	5,175
Mar-19	53	9%	177,477	94	17%	39,536	306	54%	13,289	23	4%	45,845	565	317	5,238
Jun-19	53	9%	172,929	107	18%	42,426	305	53%	13,014	26	4%	68,367	580	318	5,988
Sep-19	58	10%	180,014	116	20%	43,981	294	50%	12,649	32	5%	56,148	592	315	5,693
Dec-19	62	10%	184,396	145	23%	45,812	300	48%	12,854	31	5%	60,289	628	334	5,670
Mar-20	65	10%	183,892	167	26%	45,201	292	45%	13,166	33	5%	61,076	653	339	5,624
Jun-20	69	10%	207,288	175	27%	47,565	284	43%	12,877	32	5%	92,575	659	357	5,882
Sep-20	75	12%	211,328	173	27%	47,125	277	43%	12,979	30	5%	97,225	644	376	6,056
Dec-20	72	12%	209,062	178	29%	47,361	248	41%	14,343	32	5%	105,274	610	410	6,551
Mar-21	72	12%	209,953	189	31%	47,883	230	38%	14,234	25	4%	107,561	609	424	6,685
Jun-21	68	11%	225,246	200	34%	45,809	213	36%	16,619	26	4%	78,324	596	450	7,650
Sep-21	64	11%	229,272	194	33%	47,303	221	37%	17,059	39	7%	70,834	596	448	7,752
Dec-21	66	11%	238,266	186	31%	47,535	219	36%	17,064	40	7%	68,328	604	461	7,884
Mar-22	70	12%	247,935	184	30%	47,718	214	35%	17,348	47	8%	68,576	608	467	8,076
Jun-22	69	11%	251,588	174	28%	50,006	221	36%	17,030	50	8%	74,397	616	479	8,093
Sep-22	70	12%	255,469	164	28%	48,674	193	34%	16,646	57	10%	72,203	576	484	8,186
Dec-22	72	13%	264,844	168	30%	52,295	199	35%	16,770	58	10%	69,007	562	487	8,175
Mar-23	77	14%	267,333	171	32%	52,073	200	37%	16,785	44	8%	67,462	540	499	8,205
Jun-23	84	15%	287,055	181	33%	56,473	201	37%	19,532	34	6%	75,503	549	513	8,873
Sep-23	73	13%	296,811	188	35%	56,747	184	34%	19,615	44	8%	71,339	543	519	8,921
Oct-23	70	13%	292,641	190	35%	59,030	185	34%	19,597	44	8%	69,743	541	520	8,926

**Note:**  
The variance between the current total number of Looked After Children (541) and the total internal fostering and external placement numbers (489) is children with care orders, adoption placements etc. They are still classed as LAC but do not incur any commissioned costs. SGO = Special Guardianship Order.





