

Committee:	Schools Forum
Meeting Date:	5 th October 2023
Title:	Approval of Central School Services Block budget 2024-25
Author:	Sonya Harban, CYP Strategic Finance Lead Julia Haig, Head of Service – Early Help
Decision making / consultative / information:	Decision Making
Who can vote?	All members with voting rights

What is the Forum being asked to decide?

1. In response to the £0.543m grant reduction to be imposed by the DfE in 2024-25 in relation to historical commitments funded by the CSSB, agree the revised budgets. The savings required will be part of the corporate funding budget setting process, in recognition of the savings already agreed by Schools Forum in response to the CSSB loss over the last 4 years, and the impact of additional savings on the remaining services funded by this grant stream.

2. Schools Forum are required to formally vote annually to agree the continuation of funding for each service from the historical commitments' element of the CSSB. On the assumption that paragraph 1 recommendation is agreed, the following recommendations are made (please note that descriptors of services are shown at Annex A):
 - (a) Agree the funding for the services described in Annex A delivered by the Early Help team of £2.148m
 - (b) Agree the funding of any residual long-term redundancy costs of £0.023m.

Reason for recommendation

3. The DfE are reducing the on-going historical commitments element of the CSSB by 20% a year, with 2024-25 being the fifth year of such a reduction.

4. The revised CSSB budget proposals do not lead to any reduction in services that schools currently receive.

Alternative options

5. Schools Forum could decide not to approve these savings proposals, which would then require savings to be made within the services to mitigate the loss of this grant funding, impacting on schools in Suffolk.

Who will be affected by this decision?

6. All schools and pupils in Suffolk.

Main body of the Report

7. To recap, the CSSB block of funding was added to the DSG budget allocations following the removal of the Education Services Grant (ESG). This was the statutory services element, which was never in school budgets, and included the contribution to combined budgets element, which was initially resourced through a range of Standard Funds and Extended School Funds. In summary, it brings together:
 - funding previously allocated through the retained duties element of the former Education Services Grant
 - funding for ongoing central functions; and
 - historic commitments previously held within the Schools Block based upon decisions made by Schools Forums' prior to 2013
8. Current guidance suggests that the DfE intend to keep reducing the funding element related to historical commitments by 20% a year. The reasoning behind this decrease is that the DfE felt it wasn't fair to continue with disparities between Local Authorities with regards to funding levels agreed in the past that are now represented in the CSSB.
9. The on-going historical elements of the CSSB grant as agreed by Schools Forum on 20th October 2022 are shown below:

2023-24 CSSB budget	
Education & Learning	£195,978
Early Help	£2,148,010
Virtual School	£344,722
Redundancies	£23,000
Total	£2,711,710

10. The challenge set therefore for the 2024-25 financial year is to identify savings equivalent to a 20% reduction of the 23-24 budget i.e., £0.543m.
11. As described to Schools Forum last year, as part of the corporate budget setting process, officers made the case that the pressures of finding continuing savings within the budgets currently funded by the CSSB could not be achieved without a significant impact on services delivered to support schools. This was agreed as a corporate budget pressure that should be met as part of the overall local authority budget setting process. The reduction in

CSSB will therefore be met by corporate funding, adding to the budget challenge facing the local authority as a whole rather than within CYP.

12. Based on this additional core funding, the services funded from the CSSB to be agreed as part of the DSG guidance would be as follows:

13.

2024-25 CSSB budget	
Early Help	£2,148,010
Redundancies	£21,358
Total	£2,169,368

Annex A

Early Help £2.148m

The Early Help teams (EHT) deliver a timely response to concerns by completing an assessment of needs, and delivering targeted interventions with families, that support children and young people to engage in education.

This funding is used to part-fund Early Help Practitioners (EHP) who deliver the Council's targeted Early Help (EH) and Parenting offer. EHP's deliver evidence-based interventions with children, young people and their families and networks (C, Y&F), when they don't meet the threshold for a social care intervention (E.g. using video interactive guidance (VIG) which is a tool to improve communication in the caregiving relationship through guiding the parent to analyse and reflect on their (video recorded) interactions with their child, improving family resilience and offering behavioural support.

EHP's provide targeted casework through the completion of a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to identify the changes and interventions needed. Regular reviews of progress with family members and their network (e.g., schools) take place at Family Network Meetings (FNM). The Signs of Safety (SoS+) approach which now includes trauma informed and restorative approaches skills EHP to work with families to help them manage conflict and tensions in a way that repairs harm and mends relationships, focusing on systemic and relational shift to create a secure and safe environment and improve the emotional wellbeing of all. The EHP's work with families in their homes or communities to build resilience, reduce or minimise risks such as family breakdown, domestic violence, abuse or exploitation.

Schools make the greatest numbers of referrals for targeted early help and in 2022/23 (78.95%) of the referrals received were from Schools or Education establishments, and this is a similar figure to 79% in 2021/22.

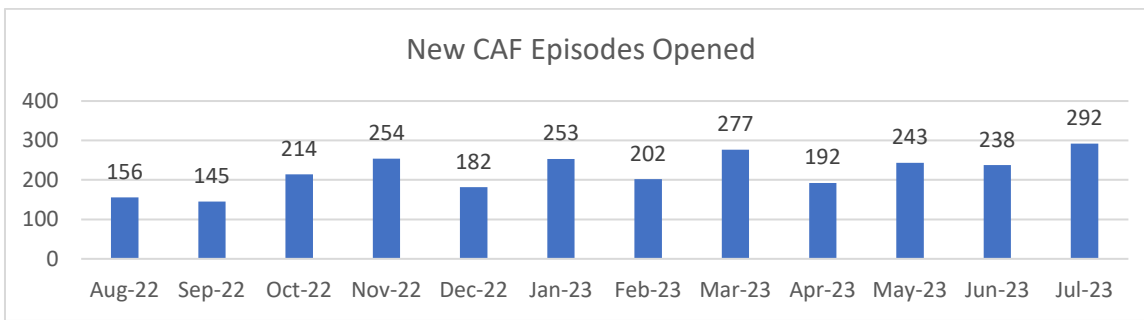


Fig 1

Between August 2022 - July 2023, the total number of new CAF referrals was 2648 (fig1) and on average 256 new CAFs were opened each month.

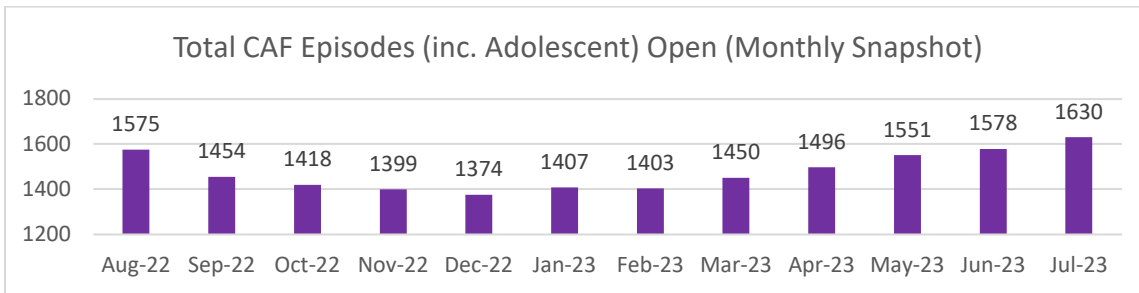


Fig 2

Fig 2: shows the **total number** CAF and young person work episodes, which averaged 1049 per month. As family's needs tend to be multiple and complex requiring a multi-agency response, CAF Assessments identify the underlying needs, risk and resilient factors and the last 12 months shows the needs as:

Presenting need and risks	Percentage of closed cases with Need/ Risk
Total	100.00%
Family Relationships	69.40%
Health- inc mental/emotional health	68.82%
Education Attainment	64.17%
Abuse and Exploitation	18.18%
Domestic Abuse	17.89%
Financial Stability	16.31%
Housing and Homelessness	12.37%
Early Years	9.88%
Substance Use	4.27%
Crime	3.55%

In the 12 months we have seen an increase in the numbers of young people who need support with their mental well-being and families experiencing multiple concerns due to the impact of covid and the cost-of-living crisis. Poor school attendance is a key feature in majority of cases and the teams work in partnership with families, schools, and attendance support services to improve school attendance.

Majority of cases are families with school aged children and families are supported for an average of 21 weeks, in partnership with the F&YP's network make change and sustain outcomes. Only 8% of cases are open longer than a year, and majority of these support young people whose need a mental health intervention before they can fully engage with social, employment, education, or training opportunities. The re-referral rate to the Early Help teams remains low at 6.7% (within 12 months) which means majority of families can sustain a safe

environment, and don't need further support or escalating to Social Care for an assessment after an Early Help intervention.

A revision of the case closure reasons was introduced in October 2022 and has started to yield more specific information about the progress achieved with F&YP before case closure. Between August 2022 and July 2023, 81.4% of cases closed for positive reasons (needs met, progress achieved, ready for EET etc), with an additional 3.8% closed for more neutral outcomes (e.g., moved authority, transfer to another agency). 14.6% of cases were closed due to more negative reasons, including non-engagement and transfer to Social Care.

'The family have seen J regularly. More so at the start when they needed a lot of help. They feel they can cope more so don't have to call her as much. Dad said that the children love seeing J at home or at school. He said they feel better when they have seen her. Parents feel that they have better communication with school, and this has been especially helpful regarding B'. **Quote Parent (June 2023).**

The Young Persons Workers provide targeted support for young people who are or at risk of NEET (not in employment, education, or training). A proportion of these young people are supported with an Adolescent CAF (fig3) to support attendance. Not all the work carried out with this cohort of young people is captured via the Adolescent CAFs, as advice and guidance, group activities to follow up on Intended Destinations and the September Offer etc as part of the CCIS national reporting cycle is completed.

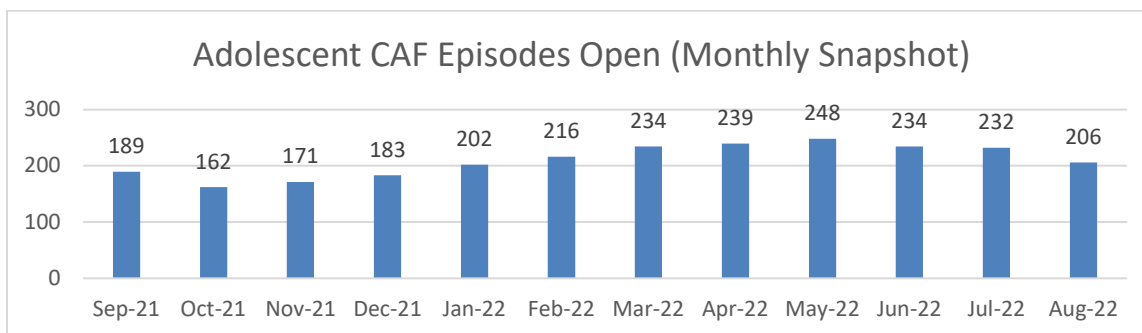


Fig 3

The overall figures for Suffolk remain stable in respect of our NEET/EET numbers, and a comparison of last four year's figures is shown below.

Overview for Year	Jul-20	Jul-21	Jul-22	Jul-23
NEET + Unknown %	7.84%	5.39%	6.34%	7.56%
NEET %	4.61%	3.91%	3.97%	4.57%
Unknown %	3.23%	1.48%	2.37%	2.99%
In Education %	80.53%	82.85%	81.18%	80.64%
In Work Based Learning %	9.11%	8.14%	1.47%	1.36%
In Learning %	89.64%	90.99%	89.07%	88.70%

Fig 4

The Early Help team also provide interventions with families who no longer need a social care intervention but do need further support to sustain changes.

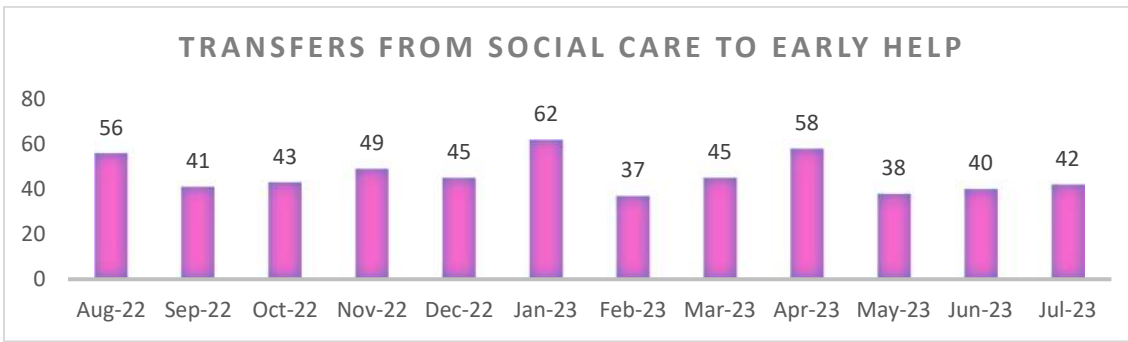


Fig 5

The Early Help teams’ also broker CAFs (fig6) with partner agencies like schools and GP’s. These are cases where there are concerns or vulnerabilities that don’t meet the Social Care, or Early Help’s threshold. A consultation, or a short piece of work usually 6 -12 weeks is completed with the family and their network, and a plan for change is created with the families support network. In the last year we have seen a 3% increase in the number of broker CAF requests, of which 72% came from schools.

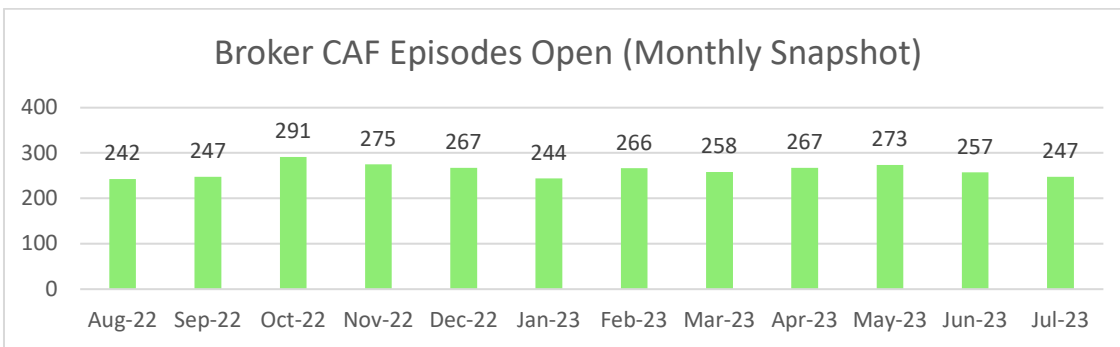


Fig 6

“Talk CAF” offers partners opportunity to discuss concerns with a local Early Help Manager. This is a solution focussed discussion and explores the family’s needs, network and interventions that may help. Between Aug 22/23 managers recorded 261 conversations and only 24% resulted in needing a referral for EH, 17% were referred to social care and 49% received advice and guidance. Linked EHP’s also meet regularly with pastoral and Special Education Needs Coordinators (SENCO) staff to consult as needed.

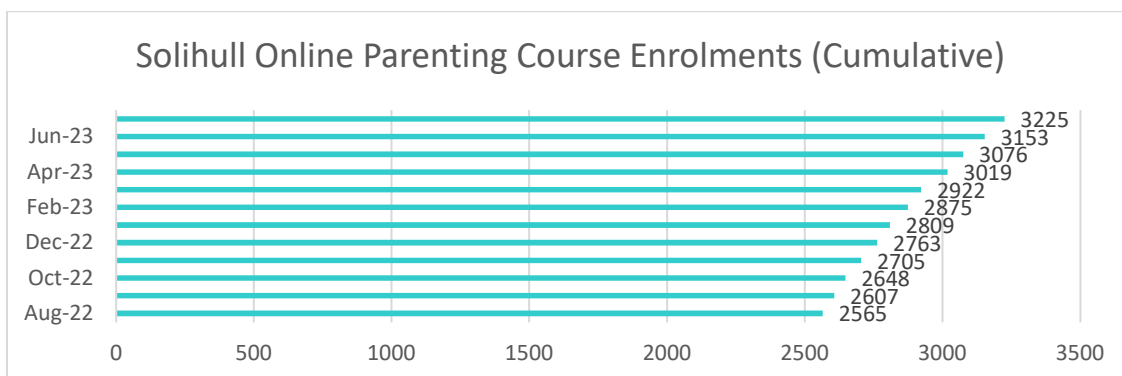
Parenting Support Programmes

Evidence-based parenting programmes provide parents and carers with the skills and confidence to understand and enjoy their child’s development. They encourage positive behaviour, foster a child & young person’s ability to self-regulate, and develop social and emotional wellbeing. This results in C&YP who are school ready, emotionally stable, and able to take full advantage of their education, reducing school exclusion and emotionally based school avoidance which is another example of the cost-effective benefits of preventative engagement.

During the 2022/23 the parenting team offered 67 parenting courses, webinars, and seminars and supported lots of parents with 1 to 1 support.

Type of course/event	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Triple P Group	23	40	26
Triple P Teen	12	16	13
Triple P Stepping Stones	15	19	16
Triple P Family Transitions	9	8	4
Webster Stratton groups	2	0	0
Caring Dads	4	6	2
Solihull	2	5	6

Free online and digital support: All Suffolk residents can access free parenting programmes via a computer or smart phone, as the service invests in a countywide Solihull licence. In 2022-23 the number of people who enrolled increased by 660.



Communication to develop greater awareness of the parenting offer will be cascaded in the Autumn term, and schools can use programme resources with parents and young people. Course materials are available to all practitioners working with families, by using a Suffolk postcode they have free access to them. To find out more please access [Suffolk Parent-Hub](#)

Funding from the DWP enables us to train practitioners working with families affected by 'Parental Conflict'. This includes the 'Me, You and Baby Too' programme for new parents, Triple P Family Transitions for parents going through divorce and separation, and Strengthening Families from autumn 2023 [Reducing Parental Conflict](#)

Domestic Abuse:

The Caring Dads programme supports fathers who have been perpetrators of domestic abuse and is offered in partnership with VSFCE providers. Courses are demand lead and delivered across Suffolk. 75% of referrals come from Social Care, and 25% from the EHT and CAFCASS. In the last year 17 fathers attended and they were in contact with approx. 66 children (their own and their partners). Supporting fathers to become effective and loving parents significantly reduces the likelihood of the need for further statutory intervention.

What will be the impact if Schools Forum does not agree to this proposal?

The DSG funding provides a large proportion of the budget for the Early Help teams and Parenting Service. Without this, the EHT would have to reduce the amount of early intervention work delivered by approx. 25%.

Interventions would need to be refocused to support families requiring a statutory intervention such as Child in Need, Child Protection and Child in Care plans, and delivery of parenting programmes would stop. The capacity to deliver interventions to help young people who are at risk or NEET would also stop or be significantly reduced.

This would also cause a reduction or inability to accept referrals from partners (i.e., schools and the voluntary sector). It would also raise the question of the EHT's ability to offer interventions with families who need help once they are transferred from Social Care which equated to of 556 families last year. Families would be reliant on services provided by other agencies including schools and the voluntary sector, and this would have a direct negative impact on the casework led by school-based pastoral staff, as well as a negative impact on classroom support time and teaching capacity.

Links to voluntary organisations, housing and support for parents would need to be made directly by schools. Advice and guidance would need to be accessed via the MASH consultation helpline, and we anticipate the number of children who are school ready would reduce, and the behaviour of vulnerable children who are not in receipt of targeted early help would impact on the attainment and attendance of all children.