

Committee:	Schools Forum
Meeting Date:	3rd October 2024
Title:	Approval of Central School Services Block budget 2025-26
Author:	Sonya Harban, CYP Strategic Finance Lead Julia Haig, Head of Service - Family Support
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 £0.434 million grant reduction to be imposed by the DfE in 2025-26 in relation to historical commitments funded by the CSSB, agree the revised budgets. The savings required will be requested as 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 5 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 CSSB funding for the services described in Annex A delivered by the Family Support team of £1.714 million
 - (b) Agree the funding of any residual long-term redundancy costs of £0.021 million.

Reason for recommendation

3. The DfE are reducing the on-going historical commitments element of the CSSB by 20% a year, with 2025-26 being the sixth 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 7^h October 2023 are shown below:

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

10. The challenge set therefore for the 2025-26 financial year is to identify savings equivalent to a 20% reduction of the 24-25 budget i.e., £0.434 million.

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 is therefore requested to be met by corporate funding, adding to the budget challenge facing the local authority as a whole rather than within CYP. This will not be confirmed prior to January 2025.

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.

2025-26 CSSB Budget	
Family Support	£1,714,010
Redundancies	£21,358
Total CSSB (Historical)	£1,735,368

Annex A

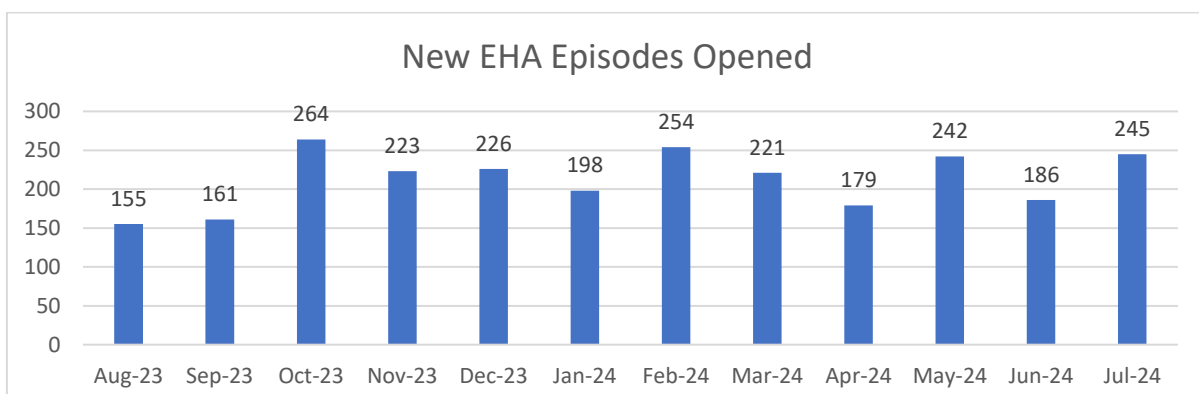
Family Support £1.714 million

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

This funding is used to part-fund Family Support Practitioners (FSP) to deliver targeted case work and a parenting offer. FSP's deliver evidence-based interventions through a whole family approach, when they don't meet the need for a social care intervention (e.g. using a video interactive guidance (VIG) tool to improve communication in the caregiving relationship, through guiding the parent to analyse and reflect on their interactions (video recorded) with their child, improving family resilience and offering behavioural support. Or working with a family to reduce risk taking behaviours and implementing a safety plan.

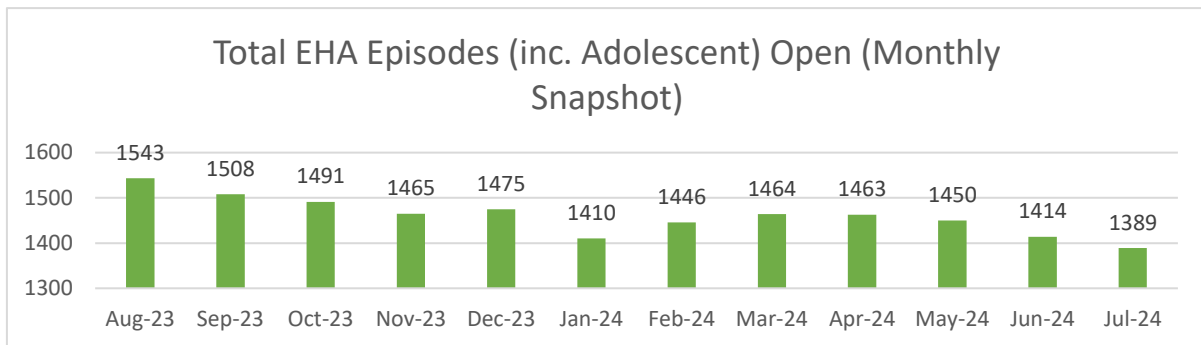
FSP's provide targeted casework through the completion of an Early Help Assessment (EHA) to identify the changes and interventions needed. Regular reviews of progress with family members and their networks (e.g., extended family and schools) take place at Family Network Meetings (FNM). FSP's use the Signs of Safety (SoS+) approach which now includes trauma informed and restorative approaches 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 FSP'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 Family Support targeted work. Between August 2023 and July 2024, 1665 (78.1%) of referrals came from Schools or Education via the portal, with an additional 80 referrals from other sources (e.g. MASH following a safeguarding referral) and this is a similar figure of 78.95% in 2022/23.



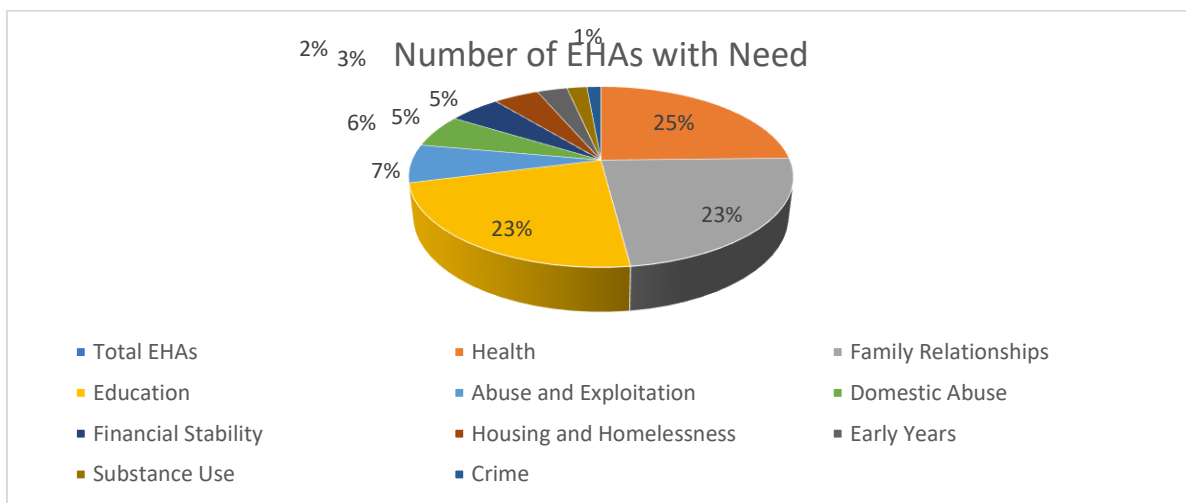
(Fig 1)

Between August 2023 - July 2024, the total number of new EHA cases opened was (fig1) 2554 and on average 212 new EHA's were opened each month compared with last year which was 256 per month.



(Fig 2)

Fig 2: shows the **total number** EHA and young person work episodes, which around 2% down on last year. As family's needs tend to be multiple and complex requiring a multi-agency response, early help assessments identify the underlying needs, risk and resilient factors and the last 12 months shows the needs as:



(Fig 3)

Fig 3: Shows the predominant needs requiring support as: *family relationships, education and health* (inc mental well-being). The team undertake case work with the whole family when there are multiple concerns, and many are still being impacted by the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. Poor school attendance is a key feature, and practitioners work in partnership with families, schools, and the attendance support services to improve school attendance.

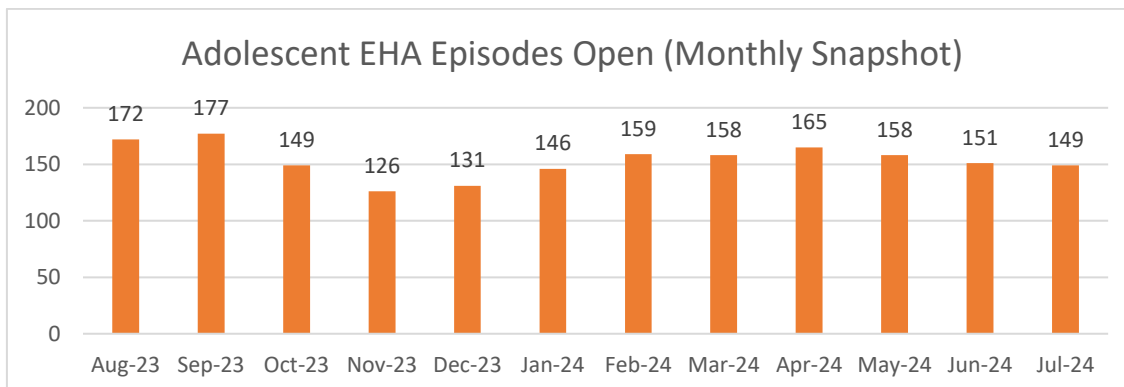
Majority of cases are families with school aged children and the whole family / network is supported for an average of 21 weeks to make changes and sustain outcomes. Only 7% of cases are open longer than a year, which is slightly less than last year, and majority of these cases involve young people whose need a mental health intervention, before they can fully engage with social, employment, education, or training opportunities. The re-referral rate to the Family Support 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 a Family Support intervention.

Between August 2023 and July 2024, 82% of cases closed for positive reasons (needs met, progress achieved, ready for EET etc), which is up 0.5% on last year, with an additional 2.4% closed for more neutral outcomes down 1.4% from last year (e.g., moved authority, transfer to another agency). 15.6% of cases were closed due to more negative reasons, including non-engagement and transfer to Social Care, which is up 1% from last year.

Quote Parent (March 24). *'S shared that she found 'A' the FSP really helpful as A reminded her of appointments as she is forgetful. S is also awaiting an ADHD assessment. S shared that she felt the most useful part of EHA was the Family Network Meetings (FNM) as they brought her network and school together. S stated that A was brilliant at "getting the school to listen". S shared prior to EHA she didn't feel able to contact someone at school to communicate her worries for L and the FNM facilitated opportunities for these conversations. S provided an example of plans being made for L to access the dinner hall prior to lunch time starting, meaning L now has lunch at school which has lessened her anger when she returns home from school. S stated the FNM's were crucial in making positive change.*

Work with young people

The Young Persons Workers (YPW) 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 EHA (Fig 4 below) to support attendance, health, family relationships and housing concerns. Not all the work carried out with this cohort of young people is captured via the Adolescent EHA, as advice and guidance, group activities to follow up on Intended Destinations and the September Offer, as part of the CCIS national reporting cycle is completed.



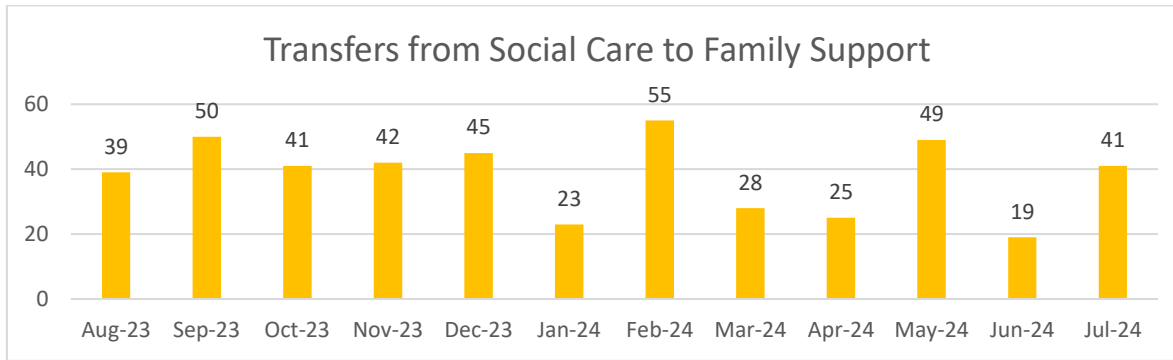
(Fig 4)

(Fig 5) Below shows 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 12&13	Jul 21	Jul 22	Jul 23	Jul 24
NEET +				
Unknown %	5.39%	6.34%	7.56%	7.03%
NEET %	3.91%	3.97%	4.57%	5.11%
Unknown %	1.48%	2.37%	2.99%	1.92%
In Education %	82.85	81.18%	80.64%	80.23%
In Work Based				
Learning %	8.14%	1.47%	1.36%	1.49%
In Learning %	90.99%	89.07%	88.70%	6.74%

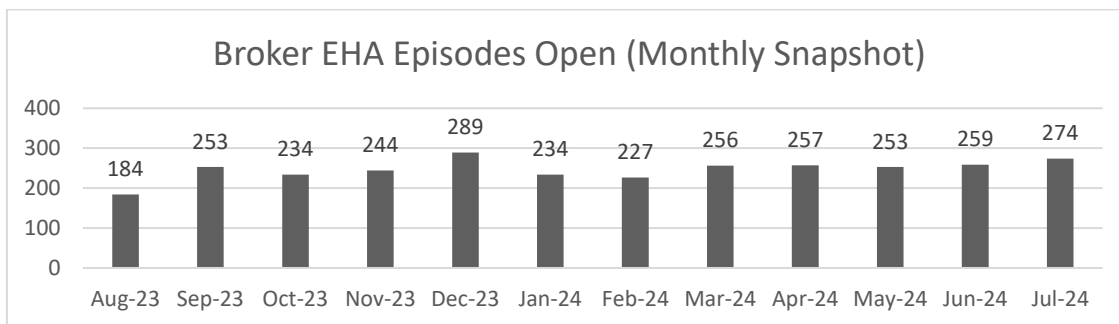
(Fig 5)

The Family Support team also provide interventions with families who no longer need a social care intervention but do need further support to sustain changes. (Fig 6) shows in the last year 457 cases were transferred which is 18 % less than last year.



(Fig 6)

The Family Support teams' also broker EHA's (fig7) 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 Family Support team'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. In the last year we have seen a 3% decrease in the number of broker EHA requests compared to 2022/23.



(Fig 7)

“Talk EHA” offers partners opportunity to discuss concerns with a local Family Support Manager. This is a solution focussed discussion and explores the family’s needs, network and interventions that may help. Between Aug 23/24 managers recorded 244 conversations and 36% resulted in needing a referral to Family Support, 2% were referred to Social Care and 56% received advice and guidance as it was felt the C&YP needs could best be supported from within their community. Linked FSP also meet regularly with Pastoral and Special Education Needs Coordinators (SENCO) staff to consult as needed.

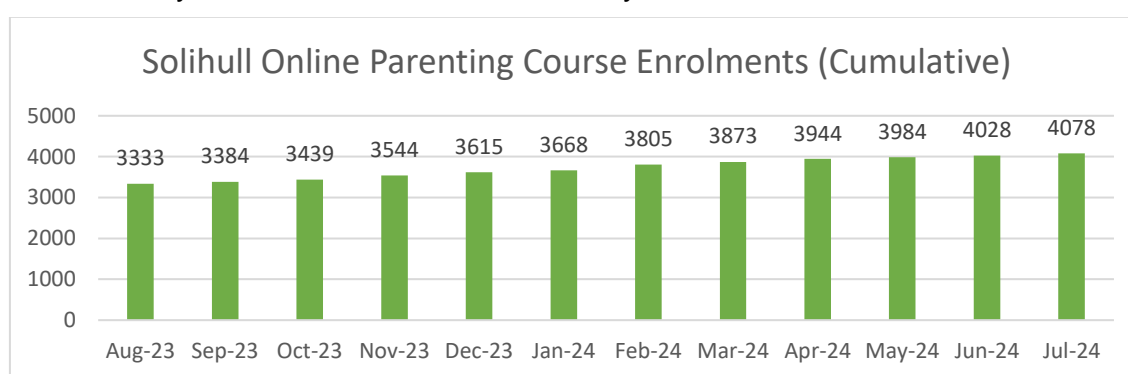
Parenting Support Programmes

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 C&YP 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 2023/24 the parenting team offered 61 parenting courses, webinars, and seminars and supported lots of parents with 1 to 1 support. The teams have moved delivery to predominantly, on-line, so that they can engage more parents and increased the ‘out of work’ offers. This change has seen an increase in retention and engagement with parents. Further developments to improve the way parents are engaged in group programmes is planned for 2025.

Type of course	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Triple P Group	23	40	26	10
Triple P Teenage	12	16	13	10
Triple P Stepping Stones (for families with children with additional needs)	15	19	16	16
Triple P Family Transitions	9	8	4	5
Caring Dads	4	6	2	4
Solihull	2	5	6	6
Other Helping Hands, Freedom and Escape the Trap				10

Free online and digital support: Any Suffolk resident can access free parenting programmes via a computer or smart phone, as the Family Support service invests in a countywide Solihull licence. The number of people who enrolled since June 2023 has increased by 853 which is 26% increase in year.



(Fig 8)

Communication to develop greater awareness of the parenting offer has been on-going during the year, and school staff can use the programme resources with parents and young people. Course materials are available to all practitioners working with families, and by using a Suffolk postcode they have free access to them. To find out more please access [Suffolk Parent-Hub](#)

Funding from the Department Work Pensions (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. For more information about the free tools and resources please click here [Reducing Parent Conflict](#)

Domestic Abuse:

The Caring Dads programme supports fathers who have been perpetrators of domestic abuse and is offered in partnership with VCFSE providers. Courses are demand lead, and delivered across Suffolk. 78% of referrals come from Social Care, and 23% from the Family Support Teams and CAF/CASS. The programme support fathers to become effective and loving parents and 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 Family Support team and Parenting Service. Without this, the Family Support Teams would have to reduce the amount of early intervention casework 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 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 Family Support Team's ability to offer interventions with families who need help once they are transferred from Social Care which equated to of 457 cases 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.