

Children's services finance

Councillor Anntoinette Bramble

Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for
Education, Young People and Children's
Social Care, London Borough of Hackney

Louise Smith, Senior Adviser, LGA

14th November 2019

www.local.gov.uk

Children's services finance

- What are the key issues facing councils?
- Why have these issues arisen?
- What do you need to be looking for?

Headline figures

- Children's social care
 - Councils overspent their children's social care budgets by £770 million in 2018/19 despite budgeting £514 million more than the previous year
 - Children's social care budgets increased by £535 million in 2019/10 from 2018/19. The biggest areas of increase were looked-after children (up 8.4%) and safeguarding (up 9.2%).
 - Spending on preventative children's services fell from 41 per cent of children's services budgets in 2010/11 to just 25 per cent in 2017/18.

Headline figures

- SEND
 - The Government announced that an extra £780 million was being made available to support children with high needs as part of the recent spending round, which is welcome....
 - But..... research commissioned by the LGA found that councils are facing a high needs shortfall of at least £889 million for 2019-20

What's causing the issues?

- Children's social care
 - Increasing demand, including an 84 per cent increase in the number of children subject to a child protection plan over the last decade. 15,920 more children are now in care than in 2008.
 - Increasing cost of placements for looked-after children, especially in residential care
 - Various reasons behind rising demand, including family conflict and family hardship, greater public awareness, higher societal expectations and issues such as child exploitation

What's causing the issues?

- SEND

- Demand for SEND support continues to increase, with 354,000 children and young people now in receipt of an Education, Health and Care Plan, an increase of 11% in the last year alone.
- For the last two years over half the children and young people with an EHCP have been educated outside of mainstream schools.
- Special school places are, by their very nature, more expensive. Maintained special school places are estimated to cost £23,000 annually and £40,000 a year in independent non-maintained special schools.

Things to think about

- Children's social care:
 - What plans does the authority have to reduce demand for children's services, especially the number of children in care?
 - Is there a whole-council approach to supporting children and families?
 - What is the extent of the corporate support for getting children's services finance right?

Things to think about

- Children's social care:
 - How do costs compare to those in neighbouring or statistical neighbour councils? What's causing the variation?
 - Has the council experienced increasing placement costs for its children in care? What action is being taken to address this?
 - How does the scheme of delegations operate in this council?

Things to think about

- SEND:
 - Co-production - how effectively does your council work with parents, carers and young people?
 - How effectively does your council work strategically on joint-commissioning with health partners?
 - Have you identified and assessed the needs of children with SEND and ensured they can access the support they need?

Discussion

How can you use this information to inform your work on peer reviews?

How have you seen children's services finance issues impacting on reviews you've worked on to date?