

Budget Proposals 2016-17: Family Resource Service

Summary of Feedback Received and Key Findings

Why we consulted?

Over the last four years we have had to make savings of £23m because we've received less money from central government. We have done this by becoming more efficient at what we do, by reducing some of our administrative functions and increasing our income. Throughout this period we have done our best to protect front line services.

We now have to find another £20m over the next four years, with almost £11m to be found in 2016/17. Much of this will come from further efficiencies within the council, but £4.6m will have to come from services that will impact the public.

In order to inform the budget setting process for 2016/17 we published a list of those proposals which would likely have a direct impact on service users, and sought the views from those affected and interested:

- to understand the likely impact
- to identify any measures to reduce their impact
- to explore any possible alternatives

Approach

All the proposals were published on the council's website on 3 November 2015 with feedback requested by 14 December 2015. Respondents were directed to a [central index page](#), with a video message from the Chief Executive outlining the background to the exercise.

Information relating to this proposal was linked directly from this index page. This contained more detailed information on what was specifically proposed, information on what we thought the impact might be, as well as what else we had considered in developing and arriving at this proposal. Feedback was then invited through an online form, and through a dedicated email address.

Each individual budget proposal was placed on our [Consultation Portal](#) which automatically notified those registered that an exercise had been launched. Members of the West Berkshire community panel (around 800 people) and local stakeholder charities, representative groups and partner organisations were also emailed directly, notifying them of the exercise and inviting their contributions.

Heads of Service made direct contact with those organisations affected by any of the budget proposals prior to them being made publically available.

A press release was issued on the same date, as well as publicised through Facebook and Twitter.

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Background

At present our Family Resource Service (FRS) delivers three main areas of support:

- Family Support Team – working with families with children 0-18 to prevent harm and neglect, family breakdown and school exclusion. They focus on preventing offending and anti-social behaviour.
- Family Intervention Team – provides whole family assessments and long term support to families whose children may be on the edge of care, involved in offending behaviour or at risk of losing their tenancy. They also focus on re-unifying children in care back to home in a safe way.
- Domestic Abuse Response Team (DART) – The team ensure rapid response support for standard to medium domestic abuse situations and are able to deliver a Family Focus Programme support and sign posting and work with both victims and perpetrators of abuse.

The Family Resource Service also delivers a range of support activities including Parent Support Groups, Parenting Assessments, Summer Activity Partnership as well as more specialist programmes, e.g. the Sexual Harm Intervention Programme.

The council currently provides £866,000 in funding to the FRS.

The service is currently delivered through Family Support Workers, Social Workers, Health Visitors, etc. The proposal is to reconfigure the service and reduce services which are delivered at the lower level of need and consider, with other providers and partners, what other early intervention support may be available through alternative provision.

This may include provision such as, Parenting Groups, Family Support work and working with young people on the edge of education. This is to ensure FRS are able to focus on a more targeted level of need, using effective intervention strategies and provision to those families considered at most need or at risk of breakdown.

This proposal will save the council £100,000.

Summary of Key Points

Four responses were received, three from individuals and one from an organisation (Newbury Family Counselling service)

1. Are you, or anyone you care for, a user of this service?

One response was from a user.

2. What do you think we should be aware of in terms of how this proposal might impact people?

Responses were against a reduction in early help and prevention services because they felt this would lead to more families requiring more specialised services. Families would breakdown or would go into crisis and therefore affect wellbeing of children. The service provided effective services which were cheap when compared with more specialist services and staff are highly skilled.

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3. **Do you feel that this proposal will affect particular individuals more than others, and if so, how do you think we might help with this?**

It will particularly affect vulnerable families and children.

4. **Do you have any suggestions as to how this service might be delivered in a different way? If so, please provide details.**

No suggestions made, It is excellent the way it is.

5. **Is there any way that you, or your organisation, can contribute in helping to alleviate the impact of this proposal? If so, please provide details of how you can help.**

No suggestions made

6. **Do you have any suggestions on how we can best identify other sources of support for families? If so, please provide details.**

You would need to bring in another organisation to provide services which employed qualified staff but this would cost more.

7. **Any further comments?**

Just wanted services retained at same level and other areas cut

Conclusion

The comments, feedback and descriptions of likely affect of proposals were those that were anticipated

Please note: *In order to allow everyone who wished the opportunity to contribute, feedback was not sampled. Therefore this wasn't a quantitative, statistically valid exercise. It was neither the premise, purpose, nor within the capability of the exercise, to determine the overall community's level of support, or views on the proposals, with any degree of confidence.*

The feedback captured therefore should be seen in the context of 'those who responded', rather than reflective of the wider community.

All the responses have been provided verbatim as an appendix to this report. Whilst this summary seeks to distil the key, substantive points made, it should also be read in conjunction with the more detailed verbatim comments to ensure a full, rounded perspective of the views and comments are considered.

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