

# Closure/Handover Report



strengthening  
families

## 1. Performance against scope and objectives

### 1.1 Programme scope

The programme's intention was to undertake a system-wide transformation of children's services to deliver the vision for children and families, whilst achieving the required financial savings. This required the scope to be flexible enough for projects to be brought into the programme if they were deemed to contribute to the benefits – financial and non-financial – being sought. Similarly, gatekeeping and change control functions monitored via the Programme Delivery Board and governed by the Transformation Board ensured that scope creep did not undermine the programme's overarching objectives or impede its success. Within scope were specific projects and discrete work packages, however, the programme extended to 'focused business-as-usual' activity where we were seeking an improvement and contribution to benefits within existing resources by, for example, following best practice.

The programme delivered largely to the published scope – certainly in terms of areas of focus and ambition. On the occasions where there was deviation from scope, this was primarily concerned with methods of delivery and/or procurement and were approved within the programme's own governance structure. There were two occasions where the Programme Board agreed to extend the scope to achieve programme objectives:

1. A mini project to supply social workers with kits to support direct work with families. These kits comprise items such as [Worry Monsters](#), emotion cards and a selection of portable crafting items and was intended to complement the rollout of mobile technology. The dual rollout was designed to reinforce the message that the new technology was to enable social workers to have more time to undertake meaningful and impactful work with families.
2. Delivering improvements to the finance system to enable better reporting of spend against placement type. The programme was originally intended to develop the business case and secure funding to run this as a standalone project, however, the options appraisal identified a tactical solution that could be funded and implemented within the programme's governance.

### 1.2 Programme objectives

SMART programme objectives were agreed following Cabinet approval of funding and link directly to the areas of investment and intervention set out on the business which was approved. SMART objectives were reported on monthly in the PMO Highlight Report and were presented to the Programme Board via a trajectory management approach. Trajectories were supported by narrative supplied by the service (the last set of trajectories produced for programme reporting is available at Appendix).

	Specific	Measureable	Timebound	Status
1	Number of children in care and/or the	Children in care numbers are available	over the life of the	Achieved. The reduction of the overall number of

	Specific	Measureable	Timebound	Status
	cost of placements reduce.	on demand, but were reporting monthly via the Trajectory report. Cost of Placements were reported quarterly via a Finance & Activity report	programme (and beyond)	children in care has been a success story of the programme (from 702 at point of FBC, to a low of 604, before levelling off at around 620. The budget for placements continues to be under pressure as presented in the Q1 Finance & Activity analysis (see Appendix X).
2	Number of older children entering care reduces	Monthly via trajectory report, twin tracking 10 to 15 and 15 to 17 year olds (and Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers)	over the life of the programme and beyond	Achieved. There has been a steady reduction in the number of older children entering care over the life of the programme. This continues to be a focus of the service.
3	Caseloads are reduced to recommended levels	A target of 1400 cases held across the 3 areas	over the life of the programme (and beyond)	Achieved. The caseload target was achieved in the penultimate month of programme delivery.
4	Number of children exiting care via an appropriate route increases	Monthly via trajectory report, exits to SGO, adoption and reunification	over life of the programme (and beyond)	Achieved in part. Issues with recording impeded early tracking, further complicated by transfer of adoption to regional service – Adoption West. Increases in exit to SGO can be evidenced and Reunification Team can evidence some early success.
5	Use of In-House Foster Carers increases/use of Independent Foster Carers reduces	Targets were set to increase placements over 3 year period	3 years	Not achieved. Current levels have been maintained in context of national recruitment shortfalls. Impact of some intervention activities are not yet visible.
6.	Quality of partner referrals to First Response improves/volume reduces	Monthly via trajectory report, showing contacts and No Further Actions	over the life of the programme (and beyond)	Achieved in part. Variable performance over the life of programme which has given rise to questions over recoding/collection of data.
7.	Increase in families being supported by joint-working (across Families in Focus and Social Care)	Quarterly	over the life of the programme (and beyond)	Achieved in part. Metric is problematic to establish as pulls from 2 systems, manual cross checking is required.

## 2. Achievement of programme benefits

### 2.1 Financial benefits delivery

The savings position for 2018/2019 was validated via the P12 Summary Outturn for Division 15 as delivered. The Children's Social Care Finance and Activity Analysis Q1 2019/20 (taken from snapshot of data as at 30 June 2019) shows that costs overall have been rising in recent quarters and are now only £0.5m less than the prevailing spend in March 2017. Children in care numbers have been reducing (-9% since March 2017), as has the spend (-3% since March 2017).

This is offset, however, by rising costs in Permanency (£0.2m / 3%) and in Care Leavers (+£0.1m / +7%) with number of Permanency and Care Leaver cases around the same level as in March 2017.

As part of the service delivery planning and annual budget setting process, discussions are underway to review the level of savings that can realistically be achieved in future years. These discussions will take into account proposals pressures within the business that have previously been absorbed (e.g. social worker pay uplifts), newly emerging pressures (e.g. increase in serious violence, more unaccompanied asylum seeking children, impact of continuing austerity on families) as well as savings within the original FBC which are not on track to deliver (e.g. increases in contributions received from Health as a result of the introduction of a high cost placement calculator).

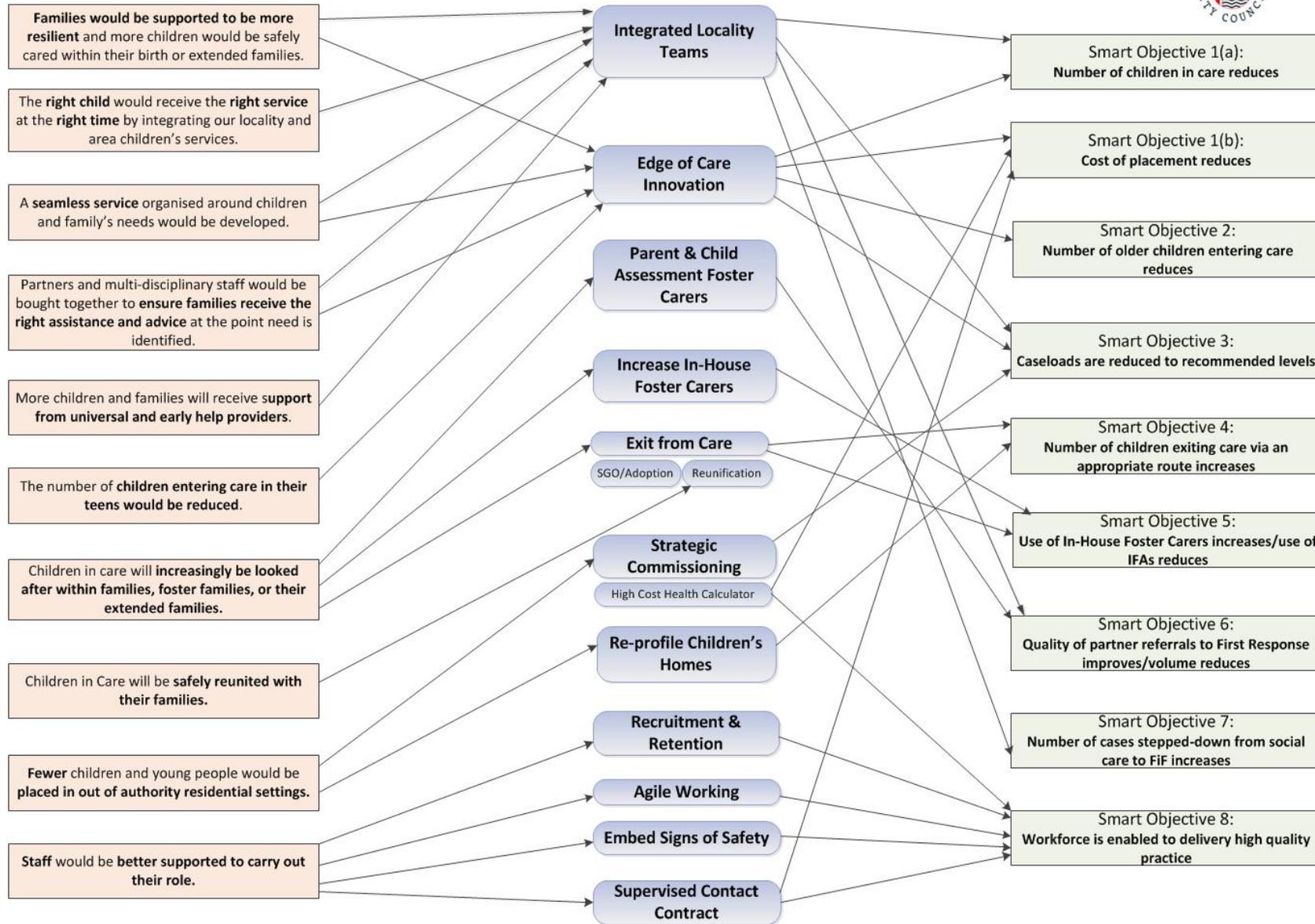
## **2.2 Non-financial benefits delivery**

A benefits mapping exercise was undertaken during the start up phase of the programme. Within a such a large system-wide change programme it is not always possible to map benefit delivery directly to an intervention as there is complex network of dependencies and interdependencies in play. Performance to date against a range of non-financial benefit is listed after the map but but this is not to be considered to be exhaustive as benefit delivery and impact of programme sponsored interventions remains ongoing.

In addition, there has been additional non-financial benefits in the form of the programme interventions giving strength to service-led funding and innovation bids, such as securing significant extra funding the from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to scale-up our multiagency approach to serious violence; as well as securing investment and delivering a coordinated response to escalating serious youth violence and contextual safeguarding risks in East Central Bristol. Troubled families earned autonomy enabled us to further develop our early help offer to ensure Families in Focus, Children's Centres, targeted Youth Services and Strengthening Families Teams delivered an effective and well-coordinated Early Help Service in which families receive the help they need when they need it (right help and support at the right time). These initiatives and enhancements are predicated on programme sponsored Integrated Locality and Edge of Care interventions

A range of case studies detailing the impact of the Strengthening Families Programme were compiled and included as part as the Annual Conversation with Ofsted which took place in July this year. These case studies are available at Appendix B.

# PROGRAMME BENEFITS MAP



**Workforce: creating conditions to enable high quality social work practice to thrive**

Social Worker Recruitment & Retention

Agile Working for Social Workers

Embed Signs of Safety Methodology

Measures	Performance to date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Settled workforce, turnover less than 18%</li> <li>• Healthy workforce, sickness less than 22%</li> <li>• Reduce use of agency workers to less than 9</li> <li>• Quality of assessments improve</li> <li>• Quality of plans improve</li> <li>• Caseloads are reduced</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building on identified areas of strength have been able to maintain a stable workforce, kept agency use low, and continued to reduce caseloads to an average of 17 per social worker               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Turnover over for the past year is 18.89%</li> <li>– 10 average working days absence per employee over the past year</li> <li>– Agency use down to 7.5 FTE</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 81% of social workers feel they have the right tools to do the job, up from 38% last year</li> <li>• A new competency based career progression arrangement has been implemented; enabling more social workers to progress to the level of advanced practitioner without the need to move jobs</li> <li>• Improving quality of assessments, with 50% audited assessments being judged good or better in quarter 4 2018/19, up from 34% in quarter 2 2018/19.</li> <li>• Audited plans shows a smaller improvement in the same period, with 36% rated good or better (from 31%). Further work is underway with focussed sessions being delivered in each service area.</li> <li>• Participation in the Signs of Safety England Innovations Project and training in Systemic Practice with the Centre for Systemic Social Work to embed strengths based, solution focussed, trauma informed practice consistently across the workforce</li> <li>• Signs of Safety training for all new staff, SoS revision of assessment form and new visual guides produced</li> <li>• Sustained reduction in caseloads gives social workers more time to work with children and families</li> </ul>

**Supply Management: how we organise our resources and commission in order to respond to that demand**

Increase Adoptions & SGOs  
 High Cost Health Calculator  
 Increase In-House Foster Carers  
 New Model of Children’s Homes

Measures	Performance to date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of children placed within 20 miles of home and in our own provision</li> <li>• Increase in number of in-house foster carers and placements available</li> <li>• Improved conversion rate from initial enquiry stage through to approved status</li> <li>• Increased exit from care to SGO</li> <li>• Increased exit from care to adoption</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewed and secured investment in our foster carers as the city’s VIPs, including innovative approach to recruitment and retention designed with the Behavioural Insights Team, foster carers, Home for Good and our Partner in Practice</li> <li>• Delivering a step change in the number of applications to foster through our refreshed approach to fostering: helping to deliver the comparatively high percentage of children placed within 20 miles of home (79%) and in our own provision (63%). Fewer children are placed more than 20 miles from their home address (17% in 2018/19) which is below the England average of 19%.</li> <li>• Good (top quartile) performance for short-term and long term placement stability (provision 2018/19 data continues to evidence good performance).</li> <li>• Delivered parent and child residential assessment framework and our own parent and child fostering service</li> <li>• Leading work with the CCG for children in need of continuing care</li> <li>• Re-profiling our children’s homes - capital investment to open two new Children’s Homes in 2019 (the first of eight in an ambitious five year plan)</li> <li>• Investing in Special Guardianship and revising the support available to them as plans to increase the number of children achieving permanency through SGOs are achieved</li> </ul>

**Demand Management: tackling the number of children, young people and families that need our support and reducing the level of that need**

Integrated Locality Working<sup>1</sup>  
 Edge of Care/Edge of Custody<sup>2</sup>  
 Reunification/Exit from Care  
 Supervised Contact Service  
 Bristol is an ACE Aware City  
 Refresh of Area Social Work Model  
 MASH Telephony

Measures	Performance to date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in the number of children who need a Child Protection Plan</li> <li>• Reduction in teenagers needing to come into care</li> <li>• Reduction in the rate of reoffending by young people</li> <li>• Reduction in antisocial behaviour</li> <li>• Reduction in contacts to the Front Door</li> <li>• Reduction in school fixed-term exclusions</li> <li>• Improved school attendance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2018/19 there was a continued reduction in number (-157) and rate of children need, which is significantly lower than statistical neighbour average. This change includes the reduction in number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan and numbers of Children in Care.</li> <li>• There has been a continued focus of meeting children’s needs at the earliest point, which has prevented the need for statutory intervention, maintained lower caseloads, and ensured purposeful practice.</li> <li>• Focused work with partners on referrals is improving quality and understanding of thresholds, particularly with school and education settings where the conversion from contact to referral is high, evidencing the impact of our team around the school approach.</li> <li>• Multiagency, area based Strengthening Families Teams now trained in Non-Violent Resistance and evidence informed parenting programmes, they are effective at working with families to prevent family breakdown and address contextual risks.</li> <li>• New Families in Focus teams Q2-Q4 cases closed (worked with 469 families/477 children helped)                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 143 have improved school attendance</li> <li>– 57 reduced offending and antisocial behaviour</li> <li>– 95 achieved work or gainful activity</li> <li>– 96 reduced financial exclusion</li> <li>– 107 reduced domestic abuse</li> <li>– 346 improved health outcome</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Reunification Team in its first year has worked with 29 children and 23 families. 18 children now live at home and 1 child returned to our care. The team costs £300k per annum and has saved just under £1m in placement costs per annum.</li> <li>• Continued to reduce late entrants to care and support families effectively, contributing to further improvement placement sufficiency.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Launched as Families in Focus (FiF) teams across 3 areas (North, South and East Central)

<sup>2</sup> Launched as Strengthening Families Teams across 3 areas (North, South and East Central)

- In 2018/19 there was been a slight reduction in the rate of child protection plans to 37 per 10,000 children. This rate is low compared with England average and Statistical Neighbours and follows the significant drop in rate in 2017/18 when 9 month check aimed at eradicating drift and delay was instated and the Strengthening Families transformation programme was initiated.
- Achieving sustainable change that enables children and young people to live within or return to their families and, when this is not possible, achieving permanency as quickly as possible
- One City Plan<sup>3</sup> launched with an ambition to eradicate ACEs by 2050

Measure	Unit	Bristol 2017-18	Bristol 2018-19 (provisional)	LA Quartile	Stat Nbr 2017-18	England 2017-18
Rate of children looked after at 31 March per 10,000 children aged under 18 years	Rate	69	66	B	80	64
Started to be looked after % Age: 10 to 15	%	29	26	B	26	28
Started to be looked after % Age: 16 and over	%	18	15	B	16	18
% CiC in own provision (by the Local Authority)	%	61	63	A	49	53
% of children leaving care over the aged of 16 who remained looked after until the age of 18	%	81	78	A	71	74
% Adopted	%	6	10	C	17	13
% Special Guardianship Orders	%	8	19	A	14	11

Performance improvement is evident for almost every indicator. Delivery of the vision and Strengthening Families Programme has resulted in the reduction in teenage entrants to care and an increase in exit from care to suitable family or alternative permanency arrangements (adoption and special guardianship). Performance is in line with or above that of good and outstanding authorities as well as above that of statistical neighbours and core cities.

There has been a continued reduction in rate of children in care, with the rate significantly lower than statistical neighbours. This reflects the ambition of the Strengthening families programme to reduce the need for care and can be attributed to the:

- focus on reducing teenage entrants to care
- success of edge of care service and exit from care team
- effectiveness of early help services and area social work teams

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bristolonecity.com/>

It is important to set these achievements in the broader context of changes and familiar and emerging challenges in children’s social care, including a serious violence increase nationally and in Bristol, leading to an increase in young people being remanded by the courts; the continuing and increasing impact of austerity on families; national increases in children in care populations and children subject to child protection plans (Bristol is bucking both these trends).

### 2.3 Benefit realisation handover

Onward benefit realisation and oversight of project activity that extends beyond the life of the programme was formally discussed and agreed at the August Programme Board. The following routes and owners were identified and ratified at the final Programme Board held on 2 October 2019.

<b>Benefit yet to be realised</b>	<b>How this will be measured?</b>	<b>Who will take ownership/ through which forum?</b>	<b>When will the benefit be realised / measured?</b>
Savings profiled for 2019/2020 of £1,642,067	Division 15 forecasting and outturn position	Service Director for Children & Family Services <i>Budget Working Group</i>	ongoing to April 2020
Savings profiled for 2020/2021 of £2,194,632	Division 15 forecasting and outturn position	Service Director for Children & Family Services <i>Budget working Group</i>	April 2020 to April 2021
Savings profiled for 2021/2022 of £1,828,292	Division 15 forecasting and outturn position	Service Director for Children & Family Services <i>Budget Working Group</i>	April 2021 to April 2022
Savings profiled for 2022/2023 of £453,228	Division 15 forecasting and outturn position	Service Director for Children & Family Services <i>Budget Working Group</i>	April 2022 to April 2023
Model of smaller Children’s Homes and associated new ways of working	Reports on progress and home occupancy rates to Children’s Home Project Board	Service Director for Children & Family Services <i>Children’s Home Project Board &amp; Children’s Service Improvement Board<sup>4</sup></i>	Incrementally during delivery period as each new home is purchased and opened (2019 to 2023)
Social Workers accessing LCS whilst on the move and fully agile in their work style	Deployment of devices able to run the LCS Mobile App	Service Director for IT <i>ITTP Governance (with reports to People EDM)</i>	2020
Social Workers accessing LCS whilst on the move and fully agile in their workstyle	Annual Social Worker Health Check survey (regarding ‘tools to do their job’ question) and service Quality Assurance Framework	Service Director for Children & Family Services <i>Children’s Management Team</i>	a few months after devices have been deployed

<sup>4</sup> By exception only

Benefit yet to be realised	How this will be measured?	Who will take ownership/ through which forum?	When will the benefit be realised / measured?
Improved understanding of placement type and spend through upgrading and enhancements for Softbox	Reduced time and effort spent manually analysing spend/improved products for managers	Service Director for Children & Family Services <i>new Project Board</i>	Q4 2019/2020

### 3. Performance against schedule

Mandate approval	Kick off meeting	Original planned closure date	Current approved closure date	Actual closure / halt date
30/08/2017	n/a	30/09/2019	30/09/2019	02/10/2019

Overall the programme performed well against the original baselined plan, with the majority of milestones being achieved within tolerance. The arrival of Programme Support in June 2018 accelerated progress across a number of workstreams, particularly those not in receipt of any specific programme funding or other resource. Additional support for the programme also enabled a more robust approach to reporting and monitoring of progress against plan. Where delay or slippage did occur, these were largely absorbed by the programme without detrimental impact and fell into two main categories – those within the control of the programme and those which were not. The first concerns those delays which, with the benefit of hindsight may have been mitigated or avoided had more rigorous upfront planning or seeking out expert advice earlier e.g. starting procurement and/or decision pathway processes earlier. Examples of delays incurred which were outside of the programme’s control included changes in policy, absence of purchasing frameworks/suppliers, or external factors such as the Ofsted Inspection taking out 4 full weeks out of delivery.

The work to deliver a new model of smaller children’s homes within the city was always intended to run beyond the Strengthening Families Programme having achieved its aim of securing Cabinet approval and releasing funding. This leaves 3 programme sponsored pieces of work which were not able to be concluded within the agreed delivery period, the reason for slippage for each is outlined below.

Project or Workstream	Reason for Slippage
Agile Working for Social Workers	The Agile Working project was beset by a number of challenges leading to a build up of delays since first receiving Cabinet approval and funding on 6 March 2018. These are well documented within the project’s own management products and minutes of meetings etc. The most significant – and that which has prevented the project from progressing in its current form beyond the closure of the Strengthening Families Programme – was the launch of the council-wide IT Transformation Programme (ITTP). The ITTP proposes far reaching and revolutionary system-wide changes which the Agile Working project will not benefit from if it were to continue to deliver to its original scope and timescale. Following an Exception Report process, the decision was taken that ITTP will take over delivery of the project and project funding transferred. The details are being finalised on this, including when social workers can expect to receive their devices in the wider deployment.

Project or Workstream	Reason for Slippage
High Cost Health Calculator	This is a complex project concerned with negotiating a new funding protocol with the CCG and neighbouring authorities for our most complex children with high cost health needs. The negotiations are taking place at the most senior levels across the partner organisations and funding has been set aside by the programme as part of closure proceedings to continue this work through to the end of the financial year. Work will still continue even if negotiations are not fully concluded at that point, but programme funded resource will no longer be available.
Finance Module for LCS	There were various set backs and changes of direction in the earlier stages of developing this work. An assumption was made about the required solution at the outset that did not ultimately withstand scrutiny. As a result, a full options appraisal process was undertaken, leading to a different solution. Once the decision has been made, progress has been solid and kept to plan. The resources and governance are in place to see the project through to conclusion in January 2020.

### 4.3 Delivery

Original approved budget	Final approved budget	Actual total spend	Variation
Capital Reserves £1,815,000	£1,815,000	£1,815,000	£0
Revenue £1,017,000	£1,017,000	£1,017,000	£0

The programme was responsible for a number of cost centres which will be transferred to the nominated leads in the service to manage ongoing activity through to financial year end. Budget Manager responsibilities linked to cost centres were fully compliant throughout the life of the programme, including submission of key milestones for capital projects. All cost centres are forecast to spend to budget within the current financial year with the exception of the Children's Home Residential where the milestones and spend profile extends until 2022.

## 4. Summary of key programme risks, issues and resolutions

Every endeavour has been made to resolve any open risks and issues before programme closure. RAID logs have been reviewed in full and have been transferred to the service as part of handover process. The residual risks and issues relate to delays in extending colocation aims beyond the North to the rest of the city, delays in deploying devices to social workers, and those which pertain to managing pressures and increased demand across children's services which may impact on future savings delivery.

## 5. Lessons Learned

The Lessons Learned Workshop has been scheduled for 26 November 2019, 2 months after formal programme closure as this benefits from taking a reasonable break between delivery and structured reflection of lessons learned. Programme Board members formally committed to participating in the workshop at the final board meeting on 2 October 2019.

<u>Lessons learned workshop</u>	<b>Attendees</b>	
26/11/2019	<b>Name, Job Title</b>	<b>Role in the Programme</b>
	Samantha Flowers, Senior Project Manager	<i>Programme Manager – Strengthening Families</i>
	Helen Haggi, Project Manager – Children’s Homes	<i>Programme Support Officer – Strengthening Families</i>
	Ann James, Service Director	<i>Programme Executive – Strengthening Families</i>
	Jacqui Jensen, Executive Director	<i>Programme Sponsor – Strengthening Families</i>
	Gary Davies, Head of Service	<i>Programme Board member</i>
	Fiona Tudge, Head of Service	<i>Programme Board member</i>
	James Beardall, Head of Service	<i>Programme Board member</i>
	Bridget Atkins, Head of Service	<i>Programme Board member</i>
	Tessa Bailey, Consultant	<i>Senior Professional Lead –Strengthening Families</i>
	Jackie Healey, HR Advisor	<i>HR Advisor – Strengthening Families</i>
	Graham Wilkie, Performance & Improvement Manager	<i>Programme Board member/critical friend</i>
April Pye, Children’s Service Performance Advisor	<i>Trajectory Reporting &amp; Analysis</i>	
Sam Marsh, People Business Change Manager	<i>Programme Assurance</i>	