



Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee 18 September 2023



West
Northamptonshire
Council

Wicked Issues



Deep dive into key wicked issues in summer 2022

- Led to development of new projects for transformation programme, expansion/enhancements of a number of our transformation projects.
- Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee presentation on 6th March 2023

Key Wicked Issues Reviewed

Children's placements

Adult Social Care

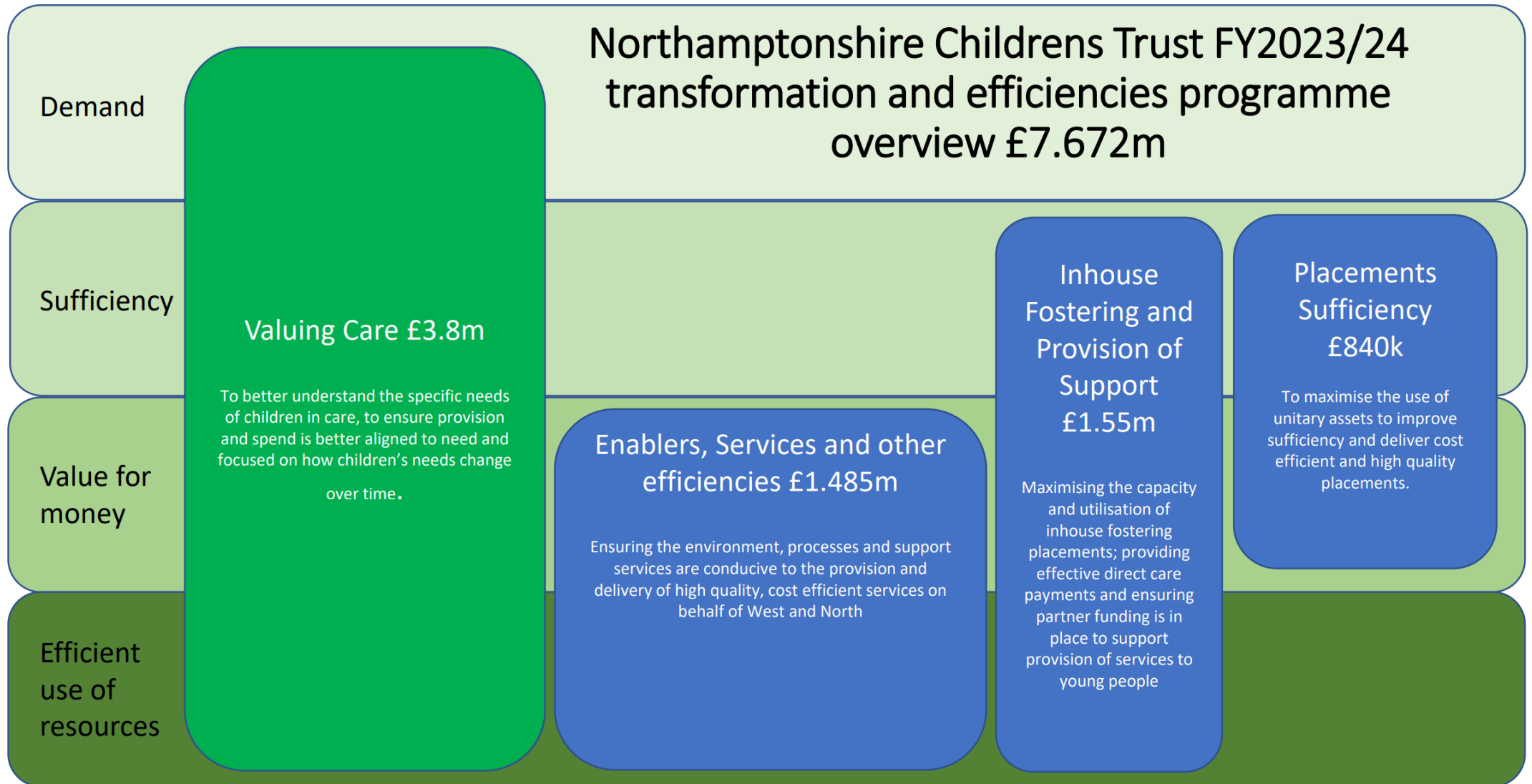
Front Door

Ways of working, utilities & operating costs

School Transport

Homelessness/ Single Vulnerable Adults

Children's placements



Nb. Valuing care is an externally commissioned project supported by IMpower

Challenge:

Rising demands being place on Adult Social care as well as cost increases and recruitment shortages.

Progress:

- Strength Based Working - The Reablement West Service from March 22 to May 23 averaged 23.46 starts in the service per week, which is a **35% improvement** since before the change which will equate to £4m over 3 years of cost avoidance.
- Optimisation of Single Handed Care – This project to proactively work on **250 high cost packages** and complete and end to end process review to embed good practice has led to £817k in saving on care packages in 2022/23 and a further £325k in 2023/24 to date.
- Home Care Recommissioning – The delivery of a new framework for providers has concluded and a launch event for providers has been delivered with the aim of delivering increased support and provides imperatives for providers to build capacity, increased satisfaction, more resilience in the sector and improved efficiency including reduced travel time. Final contract is due to be issued end of Sep 23 and transfers will begin on less complex and/or more urgent care packages.
- Supported Living Outcomes – The project has 159 Care Act statutory reviews resulting in **156 referrals to other statutory / universal services** to meet individual needs with the aim of improving the health and well-being of these local citizens and supports the council to be Care Act compliant and address provider concerns whilst making £520K savings to date for this financial year for the council.

Challenge:

- Disjointed pathways and experiences for people accessing our services – several entry points into the Council with potentially siloed services leading to repeat contact as we address one issue at a time – therefore increase in demand

Progress:

- Revenues and Benefits – **All** front door activity has migrated to the customer contact centre providing a more consistent experience for customers. For example for Council Tax email responses rates have **improved by 75%**, along with first time resolution rates are increasing as agents are able to double the amount of time on the call resolving the issues there and then. This has led to a **15% efficiency increase**.
- Planning – **All** planning enquiries are now routed through the customer contact centre with the aim of resolving simple queries at first contact and providing a better experience, for example by having access to DEF Mastergov system and having single point of contact for simple queries.
- Customer services are providing outreach services across **all** of WNC and the Local Area Partnership footprint and supporting the 93 welcoming spaces across West Northamptonshire. N5 will be enhanced when Kingsthorpe Library is available.
- The 4 Customer Experience Management Systems continue to be merged into a single instance, unlocking potential to aid prevention, and is on track to be completed by Nov 2023.
- Further use of technology has improved the customer experience. The use of a 'Mailbot' and simple AI has reduced email handling time by **50%** for example by responding to simple queries based on our FAQs or using specific words to direct email to the correct team immediately.

Challenge:

- Maximising the use of our estate to increase our efficiency, productivity and to also reduce operating costs in terms of utilities.

Future Ways of Working:

- Accommodation Rationalisation – **300 staff** from Lodge Road have been relocated. Abbey Centre in Daventry will now be a paperless environment and has the energy certificate raised from a C to B.
- Infrastructure Rationalisation – 42 virtual servers have moved to Angel Street to consolidate our operations increasing efficiency of operating at fewer sites and reducing risk.
- Hardware Refresh – **160 Daventry staff** have been given allocated new kit as a result of the refresh. DTI now have the ability to remote onto the devices using our SNOW asset tracking application, increasing efficiency in updates and security patching. Next cohort is currently being designed for rollout.

Energy Efficiency:

- Solar Array- Feasibility work has began of sites for large scale solar power across WNC along side a plan for its installation. 23 sites were assessed with **14 provisionally shortlisted**; considering not only the means for the production of solar energy but also the impact on the surrounding natural and built environment.
- Potential sites to purchase are also being explored and will now further be assessed as part of a detailed design and business case. Where solar generation is proposed at car parks, aim to align this to on-site electric vehicle (EV) charging project currently underway.
- Assessment of each site will also include recommendations of either the council fully funding and controlling the scheme or for the larger schemes, potentially entering into an agreement with a private sector partner to reduce exposure of risk to the council. A progress update is expected to be raised to cabinet in quarter 3.

Challenges

- The total spend on contracts for school transport is considerable across Northamptonshire with significant pressures arising from increased costs and demand

Progress:

- A public consultation was concluded on the West Northants School Transport Policy and presented to Cabinet on 11th July 2023 for a decision. This is now in the process of implementation delivering a saving of circa **£500k in 2023/24** and a further saving of **£525k in 2024/25**.
- Following an internal audit review a more robust process has been implemented underpinned by a new Flexi-route system to ensure check ins are carried out leading to accurate payments, as well as providing route optimisation to maximise the efficiency of the runs.
- VR Pilot underway with Billing Brook school around independent travel training, with support from the SEN Parent Group.
- Safer Walking Routes are under development to use capital funding to potentially provide alternatives to transport with the associated health and wellbeing benefits.
- Working collaboratively with Northamptonshire Children's Trust, ad-hoc spend has been reviewed with the aim of reducing out of policy transport provision as well as looking to maximise joint funding arrangements

Challenge

- A high number of families are in Temporary Accommodation (TA) which is set to rise as a national trend as cost of living pressure increase.
- Higher percentage of single homeless households compared to nationally, with links to poor mental health.
- Loss of subsidy due to lack of qualifying supported accommodation

Progress

- Research around our needs and provision has been completed and is being considered in our strategies.
- Assessments are still within statutory timescales despite a **33%** increase in families presenting to the service in July 23 compared to April 23.
- Continue to deliver on the commitments in the Anti-Poverty Strategy, including consolidating our and NPH's Debt and Money advice offer into a single place and single pathway with the VCS.