

Children in Care Programme

Report for Scrutiny 14th September 2023

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Acronyms Glossary

CiC: Children in Care

UASC: Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

CYP: Children and Young People

CAFCASS: Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service

C&F: Children's and Families

DFJ: Designated Family Judge

SW: Social work

QA: Quality assurance

Background

The Children in Care Programme consolidated in October 2022.

In consultation with a core group of staff an 'Action Plan' of activity and project work was developed in response to **3 key priorities:**

- Reducing the number of children that come into the care system
- Increasing the number of children exiting the care system
- Reducing the consequent overspend on the placement budget, Programme working alongside Sufficiency Strategy

Short-term Successes

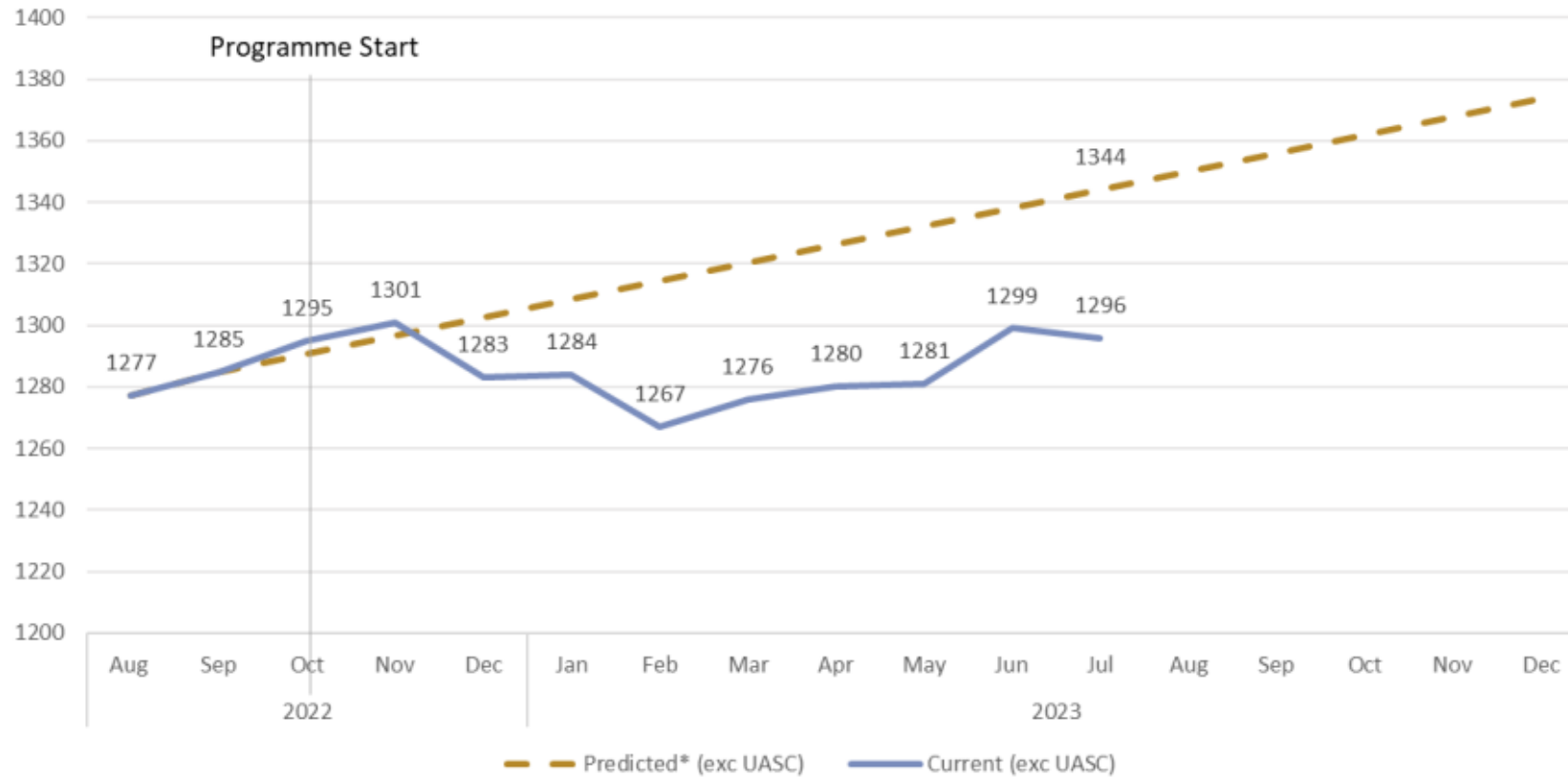
- Ongoing cohort analysis: increasing scrutiny of entries to care and planning for exit from care
- The numbers of children coming into care has reduced: 96 (inc. 19 UASC) children came into care from April to June 2023, 15 fewer than January to March 2023.
- 16 young people moving from residential placements from July to September '23 creating a financial saving.
- Children identified for exit through the Discharge Planning Team (20 CYP in September)

Culture change – key to our success

- CiC program recognized as our priority
- Staff and Key Partner engagement
- Restorative discussions - High Challenge, high support
- Constant recalibration – measuring challenges and organizing approach

What is the Data telling us?

Our Children in Care



Numerical Perspective— **excluding UASC**

Worst Case Scenario: If we had continued at the same trajectory, it is estimated we would have had 1344 children in our care at this point in time, whereas we currently have a 1296.

* Predictions based on 12 month average of new children in care and cessations as at programme start date continuing at the same rate.

Our Challenges



Reduction is not everyone's priority – Partners, judiciary, Cafcass



Culture: Risk averse system



Challenges in community resources and resilience



Resources: Placement sufficiency and response to trauma



Cost of care and inflation: +£6m overspend and contribution from partners



High level of interdependencies with other projects in C&F

What actions are we taking?



Working with the DFJ, Cafcass and Partners



Recruitment of a Discharge Planning Team until 31st March 2024



Oversight of exit plans through close monitoring and challenge of estimated exit dates



Oversight of entry into care



Oversight of care proceedings



A focus on cultural change

Programme Priorities and Progress

Discharge Planning Team

- Focus – Short term intervention – Exit children safely, reduce caseloads
- Team – Go live in August
- Planned exit of 20 CYP by End Sept 2023, further trajectory planned.
- Close working with Judiciary, Cafcass and SW teams

Residential Mapping

- 16 step down from residential in Q2 2023-24 ensuring a planned transition to independence at 18
- Exit planning for each child in residential, challenging the existing culture
- Financial impact review in September to calculate savings created (Average residential placement: £0.262m p.a.)

Improve Reunification Support Offer

- Focus – Safely reuniting children with their birth family.
- Awareness generation – Culture Change
- Delivery of policy and guidance – Sept 2023
- System improvement for tracking – Oct 2023
- Impact – first cohort – Jan 2024

Edge of Care Services Review

- Focus – Prevent entry to care + early reunification
- Options paper due – Sept 23
- Engagement at Joint Commissioning Board re Mental health – Sept 23
- Current interventions ongoing

Improve Practice in IRO Service

- Focus – Advocate/Monitor individual child plans
- Culture change, focus on outcomes
- Robust monitoring of QA functions
- Robust monitoring of service performance

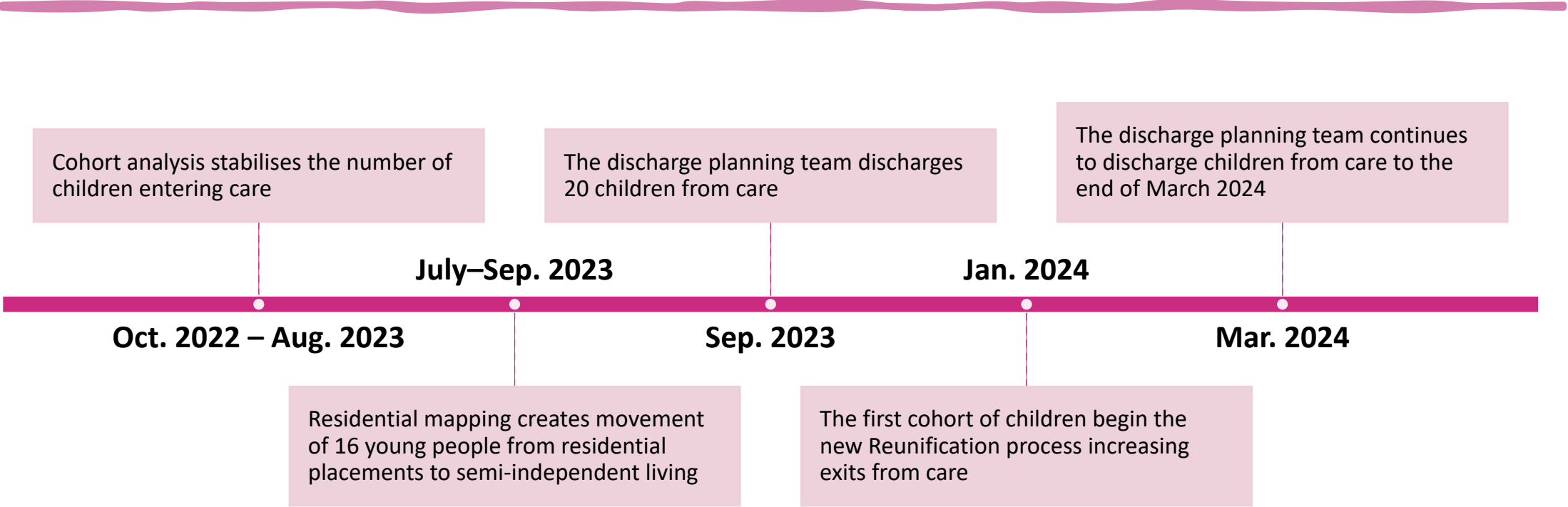
Culture Change around Children in Care

We recognise culture is our biggest challenge therefore we are engaging with People Services to create a plan for our approach.

Whilst this is in progress, steps below are planned to keep our workforce engaged:

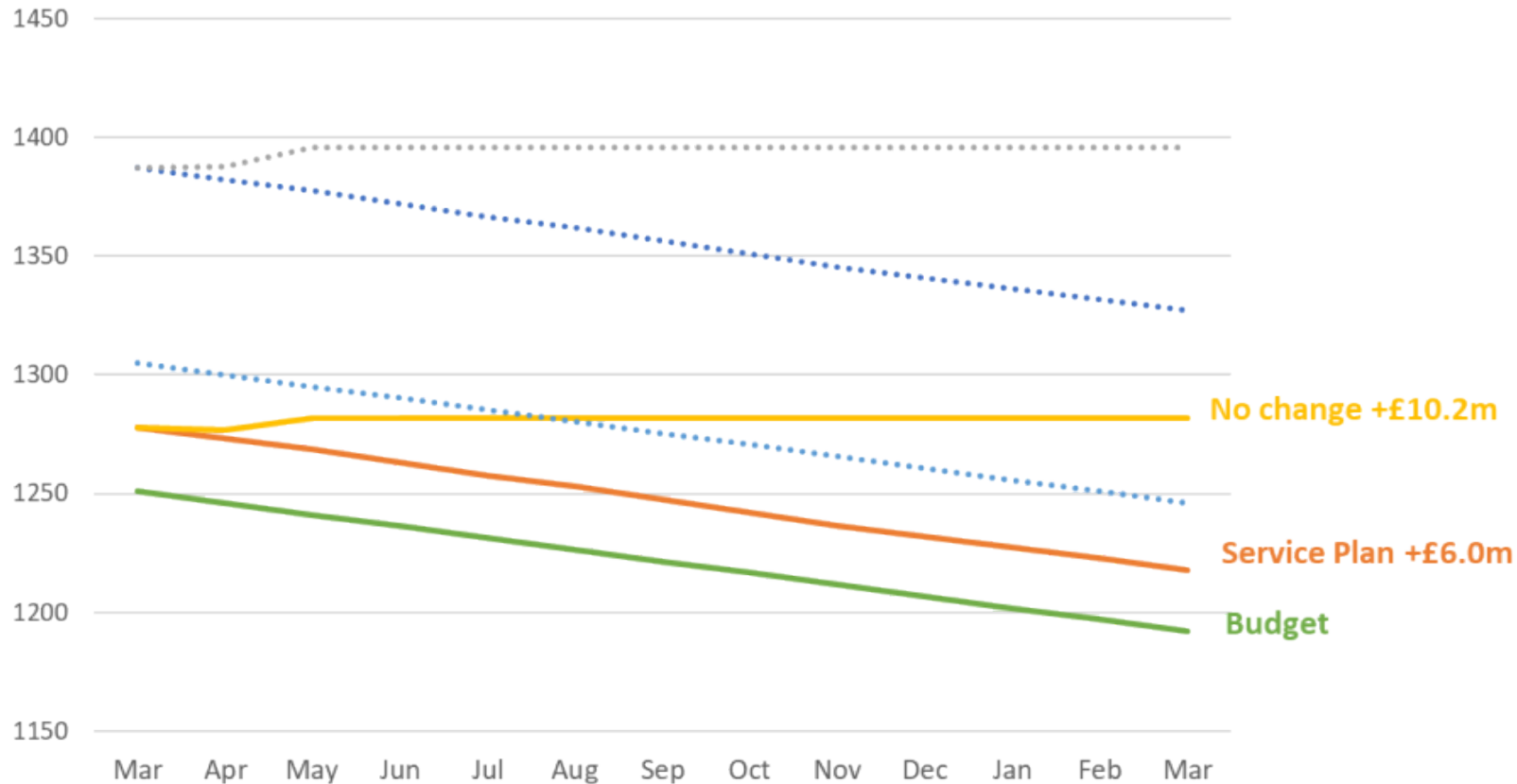
- Key messages communicated to the workforce in September and ongoing through existing forums
- Presentation at the Bi-Annual Conference around the plan for cultural change 5th October
- Training offer for all staff on 'children through the lifelong lens' available 25th October

Timeline of delivery and impact



What is the Data telling us?

Forecast CiC : Budget vs Actual



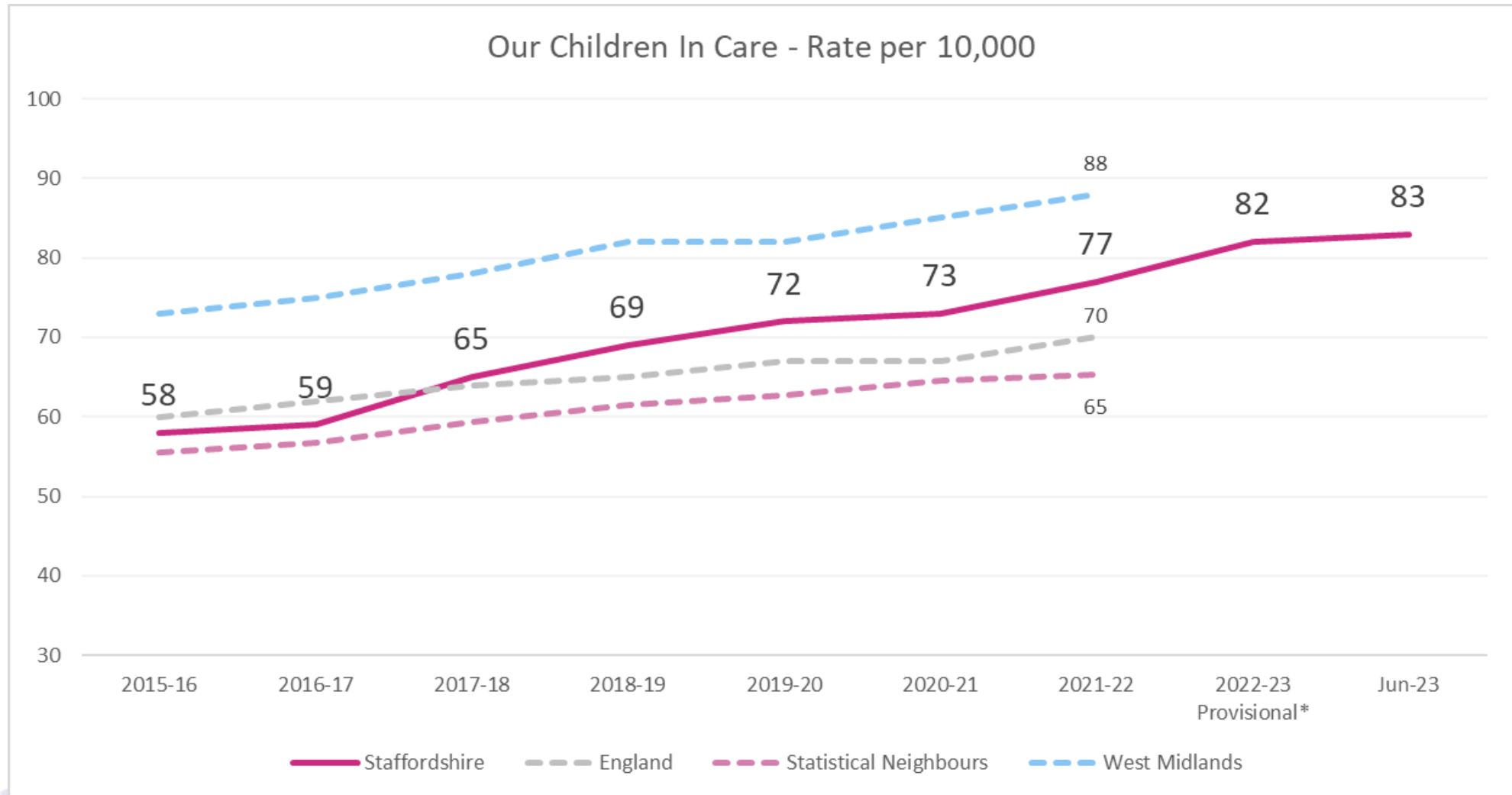
Financial Perspective

Green: the budget

Orange: initial targeted reduction by the service at the start of 2023

Yellow: where we are now

What is the Data telling us?



The path ahead

- The challenge of cultural change and timescales
- The need to maintain a steady ship
- Upcoming pilots and new case law

Thank you

- Any questions?