



Adolescent Support Unit for Bury Project Documentation: Business Case

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Author: Rachel Stringfellow

Owner: Jackie Gower

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BUSINESS CASE

1. Summary

This document sets out the business case for an 'invest to save' project to establish an Adolescent Support Unit (ASU) in Bury. By preventing children and young people from entering care, as well as supporting foster placement stability, the unit will work immediately to reduce the upward pressure on the children's social care budget, while improving outcomes for some of Bury's most vulnerable young people and their families. Over the longer term, it is expected that the ASU will contribute to an actual reduction in the amount spent on looked after children as the rate of children coming into care falls below that of those leaving care.

The expected flow of financial benefits delivered by the ASU has been modelled using a range of data.¹ The modelling indicates that financial benefits would gradually rise from around £525,000 in the first full year of operation, to £825,000 in the fourth year (see Table 3).

Over and above the benefits modelled, it is expected that preventing children entering care will reduce demands on social workers, improve educational attainment and performance and reduce the number of young people entering the Criminal Justice system. The benefits modelled are therefore likely to be a conservative estimate of the total attributable to the proposed investment.

The estimated annual running cost of the unit is £405,000 in 2016/17. Project set up costs are £100,000 (£75,000 in 2015/16 and £25,000 in 2016/17). Table 1 brings expenditure and benefits together to indicate the return on investment to 2019/20. As the unit will go live during the latter part of 2016/17, benefits in that year are modelled at 25% of the full year amount.

CYPC is seeking overall funding of £375,000 from the Council to establish the ASU in the latter part of 2015/16 and contribute to its running costs in 2016/17. The requested breakdown in funding is £75,000 in 2015/16 and £300,000 in 2016/17.

¹ This includes the profile of children in Bury who became looked after in the 12 months to June 2015, the rate of breakdown of foster care placements, and the profile of bespoke packages of care commissioned to support children to stay at home during 2014/15 (see Table 2).

Table 1 Expenditure and benefits, 2015/16 to 2019/20

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Set-up Costs					
Project Manager	25	25			
Refurbishment	50				
Expenditure					
Staffing*		325	330	335	340
Running Costs & Fees		60	60	60	60
Rent		20	20	20	20
Annual Expenditure	75	430	410	415	420
Financial Benefits		<i>(3 mths)</i>	<i>Full Year</i>	<i>Full Year</i>	<i>Full Year</i>
S20 admissions - 25% reduction		(65)	(275)	(275)	(275)
One less residential placement each year		(15)	(150)	(250)	(350)
'bespoke' care packages		(50)	(200)	(200)	(200)
Annual Benefit	0	(130)	(625)	(725)	(825)
Benefit less expenditure	75	300	(215)	(310)	(405)

* An annual uplift of around 5% is included for staffing costs.

2. Project Background

A key priority for Bury's Placement Strategy 2014 to 2016 is to reduce the need for children and young people to enter the care system by supporting families to stay together where it is safe and in the child's best interest to do so. One way to achieve this is through the development of services to support the parenting of older children and teenagers through difficult periods in their lives. An Adolescent Support Unit is such a service.

Adolescent Support Units (ASUs) are being developed by a growing number of authorities in the North West and nationally and have been endorsed by the Department of Education. They combine a short term respite service with family outreach to provide young people and their families with a service committed to maintaining and rebuilding family and parenting relationships where these are under severe pressure. By operating from a friendly 'home' base, staffed by a dedicated team of experienced family support workers, the unit is able to provide a flexible offer to families in crisis which addresses both the need for family members to have 'time out', and for intensive family therapy, either on site, or at the family home. While staying on site, the unit provides young people with a structured range of recreational and

educational activities that help rebuild self-esteem and encourage team working and peer support.

There is increasing evidence that ASUs are delivering positive outcomes for young people, preventing family breakdowns and young people entering care. Blackburn and Darwen, which established its ASU in late 2006, now has the lowest proportion of 11 to 16 year olds in residential care in the country. The number of teenagers entering care of any type (including foster and residential care) has declined from 47 in 2008/09 to 11 in 2014/15. As a proportion of all children and young people entering care, this has fallen from 41% to 14%.²

The significance of Blackburn and Darwen's achievement, in which the ASU has played a critical part, is threefold. First, for the improved outcomes in the lives of the young people and families themselves. Second, for its success in delivering a service where those children – the 5s and under - who have the best chance of successfully creating new family relationships are proportionately much the largest group entering care, rather than older children and teenagers who struggle to settle away from their birth families. Finally – and critically in the current financial context – for the impact on social care expenditure. Children's Services in Blackburn and Darwen estimate that they would have been spending £1,248,000 more on social care in 2013/14 in the absence of the ASU. At an annual cost of £400,000, the unit delivered a net saving of £848,000.

3. Project Objectives and Costs

It is proposed that Bury draws on the successful experience of Blackburn and Darwen, and of its neighbours in Bolton, Rochdale and Oldham, which now all have ASUs, to develop a unit which can provide the same offer of short term respite and family outreach to young people and families in crisis in the borough.

The objectives of the project will be:

1. To locate and refurbish suitable premises to establish a four bed unit.
2. To recruit a staffing team of nine, including a manager, deputy and seven support workers.
3. To prepare all the protocols, policies and procedures required for applying to Ofsted to open a respite facility.
4. To deliver an outreach service to adolescents from June 2016.
5. To deliver a respite service from December 2016.

² **Alternatives to Care, Adolescent Support Unit and Beyond**, presentation by Karen Barrick, Head of Permanence at Blackburn and Darwen to the National Children and Adult Services Conference, October 2014

The decision to establish a four bed unit was informed by the similarity between actual demand for the unit reported in Blackburn and estimates of demand in Bury undertaken for this Business Case. The Blackburn unit can support around 50 cases – in Bury it was estimated that there would be between 40 and 50 suitable referrals to the unit each year (see Section 6.).³

Estimated costs to deliver these objectives are described below.

Premises – CYPC is currently working with Corporate Property Services to investigate availability of a suitable property in Bury within the public estate (Council, Six Town Housing and other statutory partners, including Health). An initial review of the Council’s immediate estate did identify a number of properties but these did not meet the criteria in full – though the property may have been suitable, the location was not, and a suitable location (proximity to public transport links, recreational space, as well as the need to avoid any ‘hot spots’, for example, areas where there are issues around CSE) is critical to successful Ofsted registration.

To deliver the service outlined above requires a property with six bedrooms (four for children/young people and two for staff) as well as living and office space.

Assuming a suitable property is identified within the public estate, site costs will be refurbishment costs in the first year, and rent and annual running costs. Refurbishment costs are estimated at £50,000 at this stage, though this is subject to change once a suitable property is identified.

Rent will also depend on the premises available, with the possibility that if a site is identified within CYPC’s estate, rent might be waived. The working assumption however is that rent will be charged, and a figure of £20,000 is used.

A more robust estimate can be provided for running costs, including regular refurbishment and renewals: within CYPC’s existing estate, a property closely matching the specifications required for an ASU has annual running costs of £40,000. A further £20,000 is added to cover food and other incidental costs, including Ofsted registration (£3,000). No costs are added for food preparation as this would be undertaken by the staff and services users themselves, replicating the arrangements that would operate in a ‘home’ setting.

³ It is worth noting that any number less than four beds would only have a marginal impact on costs as staff account for 80% of total costs as the staffing establishment would not reduce with less than four beds because of regulated staffing ratios.

No allowance is made for business rates as an exemption can be provided at the discretion of the Council's Director of Finance.

Staffing – A staffing establishment of nine is proposed. This is in line with Blackburn's experience and practice and allows for the unit's extended opening hours and compliance with regulated staffing ratios.

The unit would be run by a manager, supported by a deputy and seven support workers. All staff would be priority car users and would use their vehicles to transport children and young people to and from the unit, and out on any trips or activities.

The estimated annual cost of the staffing establishment (including unsocial hours payments, sleep-ins and car and mileage allowances and on costs at 27%) would be £325,000 in 2016/17 (allowance is made for an annual uplift of around 1% in subsequent years).

A one year fixed term post for a project manager to deliver the project would be required from October 2015. The cost would be £50,000.

Table 2 provides a summary of the on-going revenue costs of staffing and running expenses, as well as 'one off' project set up costs.

Table 2 Financial cost summary 2015/16 to 2017/18

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
ITEM	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Revenue costs					
Staffing, including allowances		325	330	335	340
Running costs and fees		60	60	60	60
Rent		20	20	20	20
Project set up costs					
Project manager	25	25			
Refurbishment of site	50				
TOTAL	75	430	410	415	420

Ofsted – The ASUs operating in Blackburn, Bolton, Oldham and Rochdale were all developed from established children's homes. This obviated the need to first locate suitable premises, recruit staff and then apply for registration with Ofsted, a process which is currently taking around six months from application.

Unlike its neighbours, Bury has no residential children's homes so the option to convert an existing facility is not available. Staff must also be recruited before an application can be made to Ofsted. This extends the timeline from project inception to the opening of the Unit (see

Section 9.). However once the team is in place, and has received initial training, it can begin to provide an outreach service, pending Ofsted approval of the service's physical base and respite facility. It is anticipated that this will be in June 2016.

4. Scope

The project is to establish an ASU in Bury which will provide social care professionals with a service to which to refer children and young people who may be on the edge of care, or at risk of placement breakdown with foster carers. The unit will assess referrals and accept them on the basis of a clear support plan that sets out how the combined offer of short term respite and family outreach will address the needs of the young person and their family in preventing relationship breakdown and an escalation of need.

The unit will be open 24/7 on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays and open on the other days between 07:00 and 22:00. Respite stays for up to four children will be available on the days of 24 hour opening. These stays will be booked in advance, as set out in individual care plans. While receiving the service, children and young people will remain under the care of their social work professional.

The respite service and outreach service will be available to 11 to 16 year olds. Younger children (from eight to 10) and their families will be supported through the outreach service only.

5. Assumptions

- Suitable premises for the unit can be identified within the borough's public estate.
- Rent will be charged at £20,000 p.a. and initial refurbishment costs will be £50,000.
- A project manager will be recruited in the autumn of 2015 to implement the project.
- An experienced unit manager will be recruited early in 2016.
- A committed, experienced and stable team will be recruited to run the unit by May 2016.
- Ofsted registration will take six months from application.
- For an application to be made to Ofsted, the staffing team, and all policies, procedures, and protocols, must first be in place.
- The outreach team will become operational in June 2016 and the unit itself will open in December 2016.
- There will be a sufficient number of suitable referrals for the unit to be cost effective.

6. Overview of the Business Case and Benefits

It is expected that an ASU will deliver benefits through improved outcomes for young people and their families, leading to reduced expenditure on children's social care.

Modelling has attempted to quantify the number of children and young people who would benefit from referral to the unit, as well as the value of the financial saving delivered. It has focussed specifically on:

- reduced admissions into local authority care under Section 20
- accelerating the safe discharge of children and young people from placements at home
- and reduced rates of breakdown in foster placements.

Further savings will come from the referral of some cases to the ASU where Children's services is currently commissioning bespoke packages of care at home to prevent these children and young people from coming into care.

Further detail on the numbers of children and young people who might benefit from referral to an ASU, and the associated reduction in expenditure, is provided below.

Reduced admissions under Section 20

By providing a combined offer of short term respite and family outreach, the service will work to stabilise and rebuild family relationships. Family crisis, dysfunction or neglect, or socially unacceptable behaviour can lead to a child or young person entering care where social work professionals believe the family can no longer cope. Admission in these circumstances is under Section 20 of the Children's Act and is undertaken with parental consent.

In the year to 15 June 2015, 40 children and young people between the ages of 8 and 16 came into, or were already in, the care of the local authority under Section 20. This excludes children with disabilities and unaccompanied asylum seekers.

Had an ASU been available to support these children and young people and their families when they were in crisis, it is likely that a proportion of the subsequent admissions would have been prevented. Even in cases where a decision was subsequently made to take a child or young person into care, the ASU's experience of working with them would have supported effective care planning, increasing the chance of placement stability and improved outcomes.

Potential savings were estimated with reference to the cost of care currently provided and the average length of time in care. This indicates that the average cost per admission was £27,315⁴.

If it is assumed that 20 of the 40 young people identified had been referred to the unit, and half (10) had been prevented from entering care, the saving would have been equivalent to £273,000.⁵

Safe discharge from placements at home

Bury has a relatively high number of children placed at home on Care Orders with a view to discharge of the orders. Discharge is often difficult to achieve as the courts want to see robust support plans for the young people and families concerned. An ASU could make an important contribution to such plans by providing support through planned respite and family outreach.

Data indicates that in the year to mid June 2015, 22 children and young people between the ages of eight and 16 were placed on full care orders at home. None of the cases had a recorded disability. A proportion of these children would have benefited from referral to an ASU.

Rather than delivering a direct saving in social care expenditure, accelerating discharge of these children from Care Orders would free up valuable social work time. The ongoing support provided to young people and their families themselves might also prevent future crises and the risk of children entering care at a later date.

Reduced rates of breakdown in foster placements

Placement instability is an important issue for the fostering service in Bury. Generally it is bad for a young person to have two or more changes of placement in a year. An ASU would support foster carers to avoid placement breakdown and escalation of care needs from a foster placement to residential provision.

Analysis of data covering the year to mid June 2015 indicates that seven children and young people in foster care between the ages of eight and 16 had two or more placement changes in the previous 12 months.

The breakdown of foster placements has a high financial as well as human cost. For a child or young person who is already vulnerable and

⁴ During the 12 months to 15 June 2015, the 40 children and young people on a Section 20 who might have been considered for a referral to an ASU were in care for an average of 32 weeks. A third of these children were placed with in-house foster carers, a third with independent foster agencies and a third in private residential settings. By applying the average weekly cost of care in these three different settings (the average weekly cost of in-house foster care is currently £476, an IFA is £750 and a residential placement is £2,500), it is possible to derive an average weighted weekly cost of care. This is £1,242.

⁵ Rounded to nearest £1,000.

separated from their birth families it can be very traumatic, leading to escalating care needs and a move into residential care.

As the cost of a residential placement is on average around five times that of an in-house foster placement, preventing just one foster care breakdown, could deliver an annual saving of over £100,000. As a young person in a residential home is likely to remain there until they are at least 16, preventing foster care breakdown for a 12 year old could deliver a substantial stream of benefits over four years or more. The net present value of this saving would be £366,000.⁶

Reduce commissioning of bespoke packages of care

Further savings will come from the referral of some cases to the ASU where Children's services is currently providing bespoke packages of care at home to children and young people who might otherwise be admitted to care.

In 2014/15 it is estimated that the net saving delivered through such packages was £532,834. Of the 30 individuals (or sibling groups) in receipt of such packages, 12 may have been appropriate for referral to an ASU. Had such a service been available, then the saving in commissioning costs would have been £81,319 (i.e. the cost of the 12 home packages of support).

It was estimated that these 12 packages delivered a saving of £118,220. Assuming the same outcomes were achieved through the ASU, the combined saving would have been equal to £200,000.⁷

Summary of benefits

In the year to mid June 2015, it is estimated that the number of children and young people considered for referral to an ASU would have been as follows:

- 40 who were in, or came into, care under Section 20
- 22 on full care orders at home
- Seven in foster care who had had two or more placements in the previous 12 months.

Professional experience suggests that as many as half of all cases would not have been approved (for a variety of risk factors). So a reasonable assumption is that around 34 would have been successfully referred to the unit. If to this number are added the 12 cases who could have been referred to the unit as an alternative to receiving a bespoke package of care, then between 40 and 50 children and young

⁶ Discount rate applied at 3% to £100,000 over five years (£50,000 saving modelled in Years 1 and 5, £100,000 in Years 2 to 4). This gives NPV of £366,000, rounded to nearest £1,000.

⁷ £81,319 + £118,220 - rounding to nearest £1,000.

people might have been supported by the ASU in the year to June 2015.

The associated estimated annual saving in social care expenditure is summarised as follows:

- Reduced admissions under Section 20 - £273,000
- Reduced breakdown in foster placements - £366,000 (NPV)
- Reduced commissioning of bespoke packages of care - £200,000
- TOTAL - £839,000

This figure can be compared with an estimated expenditure of £430,000 in Year 1, indicating a Benefit Cost Ratio of around 2:1

Table 3 projects benefits over a four year period (full years). The savings realised through the prevention of one foster care breakdown are modelled over a four year period, beginning midyear in Year 1. As we do not know where this saving will fall in year, the midpoint is used.

Table 3 Benefits delivered by the ASU

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
25% reduction of admissions under Section 20*	275	275	275	275
Prevention of one foster placement to residential care each year				
Year 1	50	100	100	100
Year 2		50	100	100
Year 3			50	100
Year 4				50
Reduced commissioning of 'bespoke' care packages	200	200	200	200
Total	525	625	725	825

* Rounded to nearest £5,000

The figures indicate how the ASU will reduce the upward pressure on the social care budget. It is important to emphasise that at least in the short to medium term the ASU will not deliver a cashable saving. Its impact will be to reduce the rate of increased spend on children's social care.

Over a number of years, if the flow of children into care reduces relative to the flow out of care (as children already in the care system reach 18), then a *reduction* in spend on looked after children is

possible.⁸ This is the claim made for Blackburn's ASU which is evidenced by the figures on looked after children. Between 2006/07 and 2014/15 the number of 11 to 16 year olds coming into care fell from 47 to 11. Blackburn now has the smallest proportion of looked after children in residential placements in the country and the proportion of teenagers in care relative to all children in care in the borough has been declining steadily to around 17% in the last two years. This compares to the national picture of 29% for teenagers.

In order to provide effective monitoring and evidence of impact, a robust monitoring and evaluation framework will be developed from project inception. This will capture evidence of both activity and outcomes and will support an evaluation of the effectiveness of the ASU in reducing the pressure on social care expenditure.

Other benefits from investment in an ASU

The consideration of benefits so far has focussed exclusively on savings in expenditure on looked after children. This is the necessary focus of an invest to save proposal at this time. However an ASU is expected to deliver other benefits to the Council, and more broadly across the public sector.

A reduction in the demand on social workers as less children enter care and more are discharged in a timely fashion from care orders has the potential to reduce case loads.

The experience of CYPC's educational psychologists suggest that an ASU would contribute positively to educational attainment and performance. Many of the pupils at the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) in Bury are known to social care, with difficulties at home feeding into difficulties at school and vice versa. Input from the ASU may result in the young person being better placed to interact positively with others at school, allowing them to return to mainstream schooling, which in itself would have a big impact on a young person's life chances. It would also reduce demand for the PRU.

Looking beyond social care and education, the benefits of an ASU are likely to extend to the Criminal Justice system. The Laming Review, announced this summer, highlighted the relationship between a child becoming looked after and entering prison. Looked after children are five times more likely to be convicted, or subject to a final warning or reprimand, than other children.⁹ As well as the cost in human terms,

⁸ The ASU will not be the only factor influencing the rate of entry into care. The new service will only be appropriate for children on the edge of care who can safely continue living with their families, not where children are at risk and need to come into care. If the number of such children rises faster than the rate of preventions delivered by the ASU, then overall expenditure on looked after children will continue to rise.

this comes at a high financial cost to society - the average annual fiscal cost of detaining someone in prison was £34,480 in 2014/15.¹⁰ Whilst the reasons for the relationship between becoming looked after and higher rates of detention in prison are the subject of Lord Laming's review, it seems reasonable to assume that by preventing young people entering care, the ASU will also reduce the number entering the Criminal Justice system.

7. Views of staff working within Children's Social Care

Social workers and family support workers

As part of the research undertaken for this Business Case, two sessions were held with a group of social workers and family support workers within CYPC. The purpose was to discuss best practice in supporting children and young people on the edge of care and the contribution that social care professionals felt that an ASU could make to improving outcomes.

The description of the Blackburn ASU provided by those who had visited in May 2015 matched many of the key themes of effective working identified by the group. These included having a positive attitude with young people and carers; support remaining in place for as long as needed (not just through crisis); working with the family as a whole; being family and needs led; being available; having time to form relationships and commitment from, and challenge to, other agencies.

Social Care Commissioning team The team attends a weekly Placements Forum with senior social work managers. At a meeting in July, the following case was discussed:

"J, who has special educational needs is likely to be rehabilitated home in the next few weeks to his mother. He has had a full care order since August 2014 and since then has been in two foster placements; both of which have broken down as a result of challenging behaviour and absconding.

The plan, after an assessment of mother, is to move this YP home. There are concerns about his mother's parenting capabilities and we will be putting in support from an external agency to enable this rehabilitation home to be successful. J currently attends a special education provision in Manchester which is not meeting his needs so he will be moving his school placement to an education residential placement in Wigan. The advantage of this is that if his mother cannot manage to care for J fully, we can move J into a 38 week residential

⁹ <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/ProjectsResearch/CareReview>

¹⁰ http://neweconomymanchester.com/stories/832-unit_cost_database

placement at this school which allows J to come home at weekends and holidays. The cost to the department would be £77,410 (38 weeks).

It was mentioned that had an ASU been available, we would have had the option to provide outreach support to mother and J and also respite care to enable this rehabilitation home to progress in a timely and measured way. As it is, although we will save on the cost of the fostering placement, we will be paying for agency outreach support and potentially a 38 week education / residential placement. From a stability, reassurance and confidence perspective for both mother and her son, being able to keep J at home with planned support could facilitate and develop a more positive relationship between the two of them."

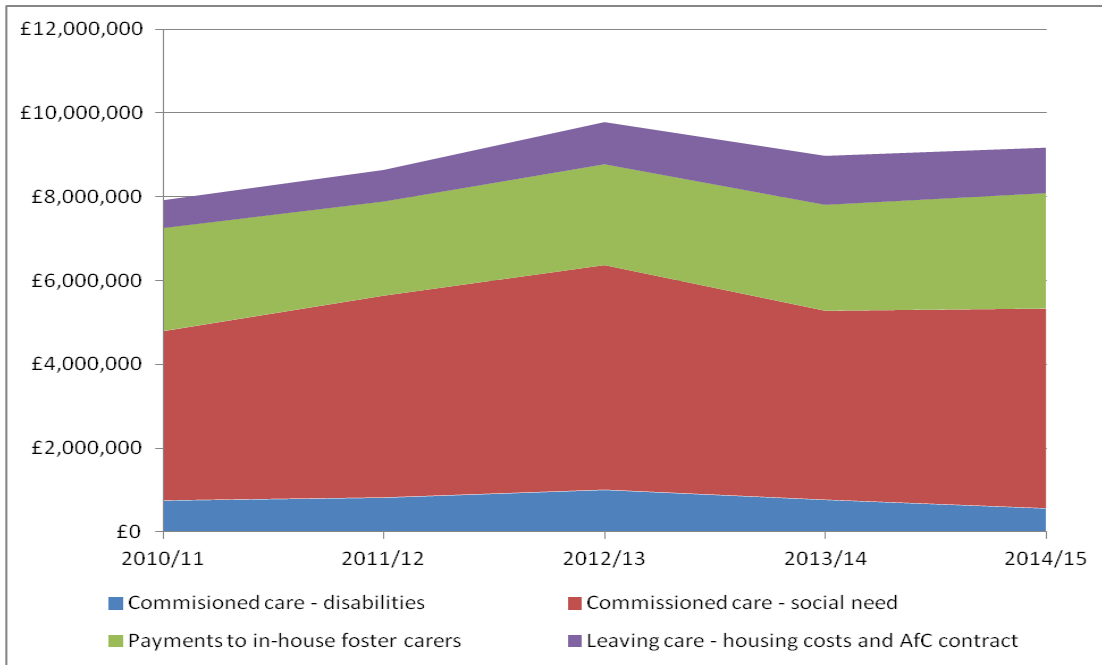
Though there is no certainty that an ASU would have been able to meet the needs of the young person in this case, in the view of the professionals attending the Forum, it would have provided a better chance of an improved outcome for J and his mother, reducing the likelihood of J entering much more expensive - and distant - residential care.

8. The Do Nothing Scenario

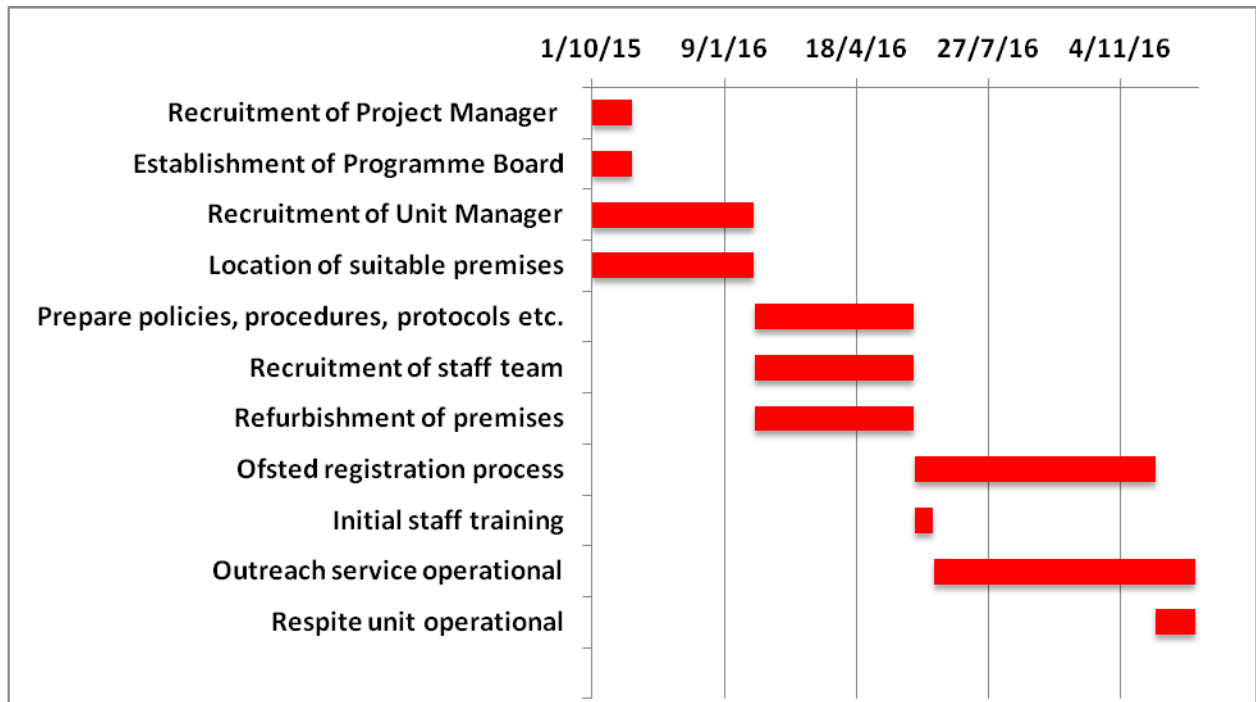
In its Spending Review on 25 November the Government will set out plans to deliver a further £20 billion of savings to 2019/20. It is widely expected that local authorities will be required to reduce expenditure over the next four years at a rate similar to that which has been required over the previous four. In the face of this, Bury Council and CYPC need to take action to reduce future expenditure on children and young people in care by investing in preventative services like the ASU.

Expenditure on looked after children already represents a very substantial part of CYPC expenditure. Figure 1 presents the total cost of providing in-house foster placements and commissioned care for Bury's looked after children from 2010/11 to 2014/15. Investment in an ASU should contribute to moderating the pressure on existing budgets and, over time, may lead to a reduction in expenditure as the inflow of children and young people into care reduces.

Figure 1 Total cost of placements for Bury's looked after children and young people, 2010/11 to 2014/15



9. Timeline for Establishing an Adolescent Support Unit



Key milestones:

1. Appointment of Project Manager
2. Appointment of Unit Manager
3. Premises identified
4. Staff team appointed
5. Application submitted to Ofsted
6. Outreach Service begins operation
7. Ofsted approval
8. Unit opens

The early appointment of a Project Manager will ensure that a governance structure for the project is established quickly, and work on both locating suitable premises and recruiting a unit manager can begin without delay.

Once in post, the Unit Manager, supported by the Project Manager, will:

- Develop all the policies, protocols, procedures and staff training plans required before submitting an application to Ofsted to register the new Unit.

- Develop referral pathways with other services, as well as protocols for working with other partners, including NHS partners and schools (PRU and mainstream).
- Recruit the staff team
- Manage the refurbishment of the premises.

The application to Ofsted cannot be submitted until these workstreams are more or less complete. Currently the time between application and approval is running at six months. Based on this, and assuming the application is approved, the Unit would open in December 2016.

Although the Unit cannot open until Ofsted approval is received, the staff team can begin to provide outreach once the team is in place and has completed initial training. This is expected to be by mid June 2016. Further training would take place over the following months to ensure that when the unit opened, all training requirements had been met.

Recommended High level project management arrangements

Position	Name	Title
Project Sponsor	Mark Carriline	Executive Director, CYPC
Senior User	Jackie Gower	AD, Social Care, CYPC
Senior Supplier (may not be known at this stage)		
Project Manager		