

Draft Budget Proposals: Children and Families

Budget Growth Proposals

Budget growth, as detailed below, is required to allow for increases in costs due to inflation, changes in the population of Sandwell and their needs, either through population growth or changes in the age profile, or to correct historic estimates.

All amounts represent a variation to the approved budget for 2025/26.

Directorate /Portfolio	Income/ Expenditure	Description	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m	2029/30 £m	2030/31 £m
Children and Education							
Children & Families	Expenditure	Sandwell Children's Trust Contract price variation due to inflation and demographic changes	7.404	9.503	11.965	14.487	17.073
Children & Families	Expenditure	Sandwell Children's Trust Contribution to fund historic deficit (to be funded from Earmarked Reserves)	6.597	6.597	-	-	-
Children & Families	Expenditure	Growth Additional staffing resource within Partnerships and Inclusive Learning	0.620	0.639	0.658	0.678	0.698
Children & Families	Expenditure	General Inflation Unavoidable inflationary increases on key contracts and utility prices	-	-	0.018	0.037	0.056
Children & Families	Expenditure	Pay Inflation Average salary increases are forecast at 3% per annum (costs include pay award plus additional costs of National Insurance and Pension Contributions)	0.471	0.963	1.465	1.985	2.519
Total			15.092	17.702	14.106	17.187	20.346

Efficiency and Income Generation Proposals

Detailed General Fund efficiency and income generation proposals by service directorate:

Directorate/ Portfolio	Income/ Expenditure	Category	New or Existing Proposal	Description	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m	2029/30 £m	2030/31 £m
Children and Education:									
Children & Families	Expenditure	Reducing the cost of high-cost services	New	SEND Transport Efficiencies Provision of SEND travel assistance is a statutory responsibility. The projected efficiency is a result of improved cost control - the type and quality of provision is unaffected	(0.782)	(0.782)	(0.782)	(0.782)	(0.782)
Children & Families	Expenditure	Making services fit for the future	New	Family Hubs Contract Renegotiation Recommissioning of core Family Hubs contract, currently valued at £3.195m per year. Recommissioning will deliver efficiencies of £0.100m per annum (a 3.1% reduction in costs)	(0.100)	(0.100)	(0.100)	(0.100)	(0.100)

Directorate/ Portfolio	Income/ Expenditure	Category	New or Existing Proposal	Description	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m	2029/30 £m	2030/31 £m
Children & Families	Expenditure	Making services fit for the future	New	Sandwell Transition Education Partnership Service (STEPS) Reduced Staffing Costs Reduction in funding required for the STEPS Centre. There are fewer newly arrived pupils requiring immediate placement, so there is a reduction in the amount of service provision required	(0.070)	(0.070)	(0.070)	(0.070)	(0.070)
Children & Families	Expenditure	Reduce budgets and remove vacant posts where no longer needed	New	Reduction in External Legal Costs The council is responsible for legal claims relating to children and young people involved with social care, using insurance or solicitors to resolve cases depending on the nature of the claim. Although Sandwell Children's Trust took over service provision in 2018, legacy legal claims remain the council's responsibility. These have declined over time, which has led to a reduction in expenditure	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.050)

Directorate/ Portfolio	Income/ Expenditure	Category	New or Existing Proposal	Description	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m	2029/30 £m	2030/31 £m
Children & Families	Expenditure	Reduce budgets and remove vacant posts where no longer needed	New	No Recourse to Public Funds – Efficiency Reductions Following the transfer of responsibility for the NRPF budget to Children and Education in October 2023 and the creation of a dedicated role to manage spending and support social workers, proactive engagement has led to reduced expenditure. Based on actual and projected expenditure for 2024/25 and 2025/26, it is proposed to further reduce the budget by £0.050m, in addition to previous reductions	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.050)
Children & Families	Income	Making the best use of grants and contributions	New	School Improvement – Additional DSG Income An extra £0.030m for School Improvement services is being funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) through a delegation from School's Forum, reducing the equivalent amount of funding required from the General Fund	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.030)

Directorate/ Portfolio	Income/ Expenditure	Category	New or Existing Proposal	Description	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m	2029/30 £m	2030/31 £m
Children & Families / Adult Services, Health & Wellbeing	Income	Making the best use of grants and contributions	New	Uplift of Public Health 'Redirects' Additional uplifted Public Health Grant income to support increasing relevant costs within services across the council	(0.300)	(0.300)	(0.300)	(0.300)	(0.300)
Total					(1.382)	(1.382)	(1.382)	(1.382)	(1.382)

Draft Directorate Budgets

Children and Education



Sally Giles
Executive Director
Children & Education

The service helps children, young people, and families with education and support. It covers learning help, early years and childcare, and helps pupils who need extra support, including those in virtual schools.

It supports children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), making sure they get the right education and support. This includes planning, educational psychology, sensory support, and specialist teaching in schools and early years settings.

The service also deals with things like school organisation, admissions, attendance, travel help, and keeping children safe. These are important for schools, families, and children.

Other work includes teaming up with children's social care, youth services, family hubs, residential education, and skills development. The directorate manages the contract with Sandwell Children's Trust, which provides children's social care. Sandwell Children's Trust is fully owned by the Council.

The budget growth variations reflect the updated likely costs of the contract with Sandwell Children's Trust but also factors in payments to the Trust to clear their historic deficits. These deficit payments will be funded from contract risk earmarked reserves.

Children and Education	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Approved Net Budget 2025/26	109.923	109.923	109.923	109.923	109.923
Budget Growth to Fund Pressures	15.092	17.702	14.106	17.187	20.346
Efficiencies and Income Generation					
Proposals	(1.382)	(1.382)	(1.382)	(1.382)	(1.382)
Funding from Reserves	(6.597)	(6.597)	-	-	-
Draft Net Budget 2026/27	117.036	119.646	122.647	125.728	128.887