



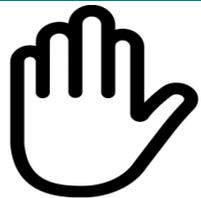
# Beyond Barriers

## Finance and Budget Planning

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# Agenda



**Welcome and introductions**



**Setting the context of this session**



**Current financial context & challenges for children's services**



**Roles, responsibilities and relationships**



**Case studies**

# About me - Andy



- Former child in care, adopted at 10 – positive experience of social workers shaped who I am
- Qualified as a social worker and progressed from practitioner to Service Director in Leicester (1995–2014)
- 2010–2017: Associate Inspector, Ofsted – the only serving DCS on the programme
- 2014: Moved to Derby as Service Director (Early Intervention & Integrated Safeguarding) – a deliberate sideways move to test myself in a new authority
- 2015: Appointed Acting Director of Children’s Services during transition to a People’s Directorate
- 2016–present: Strategic Director, People’s Services – bringing together Children’s, Adults & Public Health
- 2024/25: President, ADCS – representing the sector nationally and advocating for children with national government

# About me - Alison



- **CIPFA qualified accountant**
- **Section 151 officer at Derby City Council**
- **Vice chair Society Unitary Treasurers**
- **35 years in local government, 20 years senior position**
- **Passionate about the sector, wear my public sector badge with pride**
- **Head of finance for education then children's services for 10 years**
- **Values based**
- **Leading the Council's finances through the most challenging period ever!**

# Wider context of this session

This programme is intentionally designed for Global Majority leaders in Children's Services

We recognise:

- GM leaders remain underrepresented in senior financial decision-making roles
- Stereotypes persist about financial competence
- Scrutiny in budget conversations might not be experienced equally

It's important to:

- Name and challenge stereotypes
- Build financial confidence
- Demystify budget processes

Let's Name what sometimes Goes unsaid - GM leaders may experience assumptions such as:

- "Too operational, not strategic"
- "Risk averse" or conversely "financially naïve"
- Being questioned more rigorously on spend decisions
- Having to repeatedly "prove" financial competence
- "Asian leaders are naturally good at finance"

Even so-called "positive" stereotypes are harmful.

Financial capability is learned, developed and sponsored - not culturally inherited.

# The current financial context



- Local government funding has fallen since 2010

- Fair Funding Reforms

- Local Government Reorganisation

- Local Government Outcomes Framework

- Demand and Cost Increases

- DSG Deficits

- Government financial intervention



# Challenges for Children's Services

- Funding and budget constraints
- Delivering reform
- Increasing demand, LAC and SEND
- DSG Deficits - Statutory override ends March 2028
- Workforce pressures
- Regulatory compliance
- Integration and partners
- Impact of social issues
- Financial forecasting and data management
- Public expectations

# How Council budget setting works

- **Government funding + Council Tax + Grants**
- **Political priorities**
- **Corporate savings targets**
- **Review and challenge of service pressures**
- **Directorate allocation/targets**
- **Business planning and transformation**
- **Monthly monitoring and forecasting**

# The role of middle/senior leaders

- Forecasting pressures early
- Understanding cost drivers
- Managing establishment
- Identifying efficiencies and value for money
- Linking spend to outcomes
- Avoiding budget drift
- Resourcing change

# Role of the S151 Officer and DCS culture



- The Section 151 (s151) Officer is a statutory role in local government, responsible for ensuring that the council makes arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs



- A sound trusting relationship is essential between the DCS and the 151
- Effective collaboration, you could pose the single biggest risk to the sustainability of the Council – that must be managed effectively between the two of you



- Corporate arms wrap around you, they don't police you

# Successful financial strategies

- **Corporate acknowledgement of children's issues – Corporate Plan, Medium Term Financial Plan**
- **Good understanding of forecasts and demands**
- **Well versed elected members**
- **Does the 151 and CE understand children's issues?**
- **Planning for improvement and inspection readiness**
- **Sound delivery of savings**

# Case study 1

Quarterly reporting to mid year had been forecasting a balanced position however by quarter 3 an overspend had started to transpire although not significant. Final outturn reported a significant variance.

**How would you approach this, what should you consider?**

# Case study 2

**Good financial governance is so important, a break down of which can lead to serious consequences.**

**What do you think are the key elements to consider in this area, what do you need to know?**

# Case study 3

Children's services is the largest department that have traditionally been supported by government grants, mainly to deliver ministerial priorities. This is recognised as being a mechanism by which the government can 'protect and have control' over their funding.

**Where you have grant funded areas what should you consider?**

# Questions and Reflections

**Thank you**

