

Aberdeenshire Council

Integrated Impact Assessment

Budget Saving Proposal 2025/26 - Removal of Homestart Funding over three years from 2025/26

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1. Overview

This document has been generated from information entered into the Integrated Impact Assessment system.

Homestart delivers services in the family home providing practical advice and support. Homestart coordinates volunteers to work with vulnerable families with children aged 0-5 years. They liaise with other professionals and parents to assess the need of children and their families and offer tailored support to meet these. They signpost parents to other services/training and support them to access these as appropriate. Homestart supports families of 423 children by 161 visiting volunteers.

The budget saving proposal is to terminate Aberdeenshire Council's contract with Homestart, phasing out the funding over 3 years. The current status of contract is under PIN notice with contract extended and currently no notice period required.

The current budget allocation for the Homestart contract is £232,000 and the proposal is to reduce funding as follows:

FY25/26: budget allocation £155,000 (budget saving of £77,333)

FY 26/27: budget allocation £77,333 (budget saving of £77,333)

FY 27/28: Budget allocation £0 (budget saving of £77,333)

The phasing out of funding should allow Homestart to phase out support from existing caseload and/or also to explore opportunities for alternative funding streams.

Further, Aberdeenshire Council have no statutory duty to provide a home-service to children and parents. The Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care Partnership (AHSCP) has responsibility for the health visiting service who deliver a core home visiting programme for all families and act as the Named Person under the national GIRFEC policy and practice model.

Aberdeenshire Council provide Early Learning and Childcare with eligible 2 year olds and all 3-5 year olds entitled to access 1140 provision. ELC staffing are also trained and skilled in working with vulnerable children and parents and will refer into partner agencies for targeted and specialise support as appropriate and required.

Given the ongoing financial challenges being faced by both the Early Years service and the wider Council, the proposal is to terminate the funding of an externally provided, non-statutory service to protect the funding and delivery of the EY service's core function and responsibility.

During screening 6 of 11 questions indicated that detailed assessments were required, the screening questions and their answers are listed in the next section. This led to 3 out of 5 detailed impact assessments being completed. The assessments required are:

- Childrens' Rights and Wellbeing
- Equalities and Fairer Scotland Duty
- Health Inequalities

In total there are 0 positive impacts as part of this activity. There are 11 negative impacts, of these negative impacts, 2 have been mitigated and 9 cannot be mitigated satisfactorily.

A detailed action plan with 1 points has been provided.

This assessment has been approved by annemarie.daviesmacleod@aberdeenshire.gov.uk.

The remainder of this document sets out the details of all completed impact assessments.

2. Screening

Could your activity / proposal / policy cause an impact in one (or more) of the identified town centres?	No
Would this activity / proposal / policy have consequences for the health and wellbeing of the population in the affected communities?	Yes
Does the activity / proposal / policy have the potential to affect greenhouse gas emissions (CO2e) in the Council or community and / or the procurement, use or disposal of physical resources?	No
Does the activity / proposal / policy have the potential to affect the resilience to extreme weather events and/or a changing climate of Aberdeenshire Council or community?	No
Does the activity / proposal / policy have the potential to affect the environment, wildlife or biodiversity?	No
Does the activity / proposal / policy have an impact on people and / or groups with protected characteristics?	Yes
Is this activity / proposal / policy of strategic importance for the council?	No
Does this activity / proposal / policy impact on inequality of outcome?	Yes
Does this activity / proposal / policy have an impact on children / young people's rights?	Yes
Does this activity / proposal / policy have an impact on children / young people's wellbeing?	Yes
Does the activity / proposal / policy relate to budget proposals?	Yes

3. Impact Assessments

Children's Rights and Wellbeing	No Negative Impacts Can Be Mitigated
Climate Change and Sustainability	Not Required
Equalities and Fairer Scotland Duty	No Negative Impacts Can Be Mitigated
Health Inequalities	No Negative Impacts Can Be Mitigated
Town Centre's First	Not Required

4. Childrens' Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment

4.1. Wellbeing Indicators

Indicator	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
Safe			Yes	
Healthy			Yes	
Achieving		Yes		
Nurtured			Yes	
Active		Yes		
Respected		Yes		
Responsible		Yes		
Included		Yes		

4.2. Rights Indicators

UNCRC Indicators upheld by this activity / proposal / policy	Article 3 - Best interests of the child Article 6 - Life, survival and development
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4.3. Negative Impacts and Mitigations

Impact Area	Details and Mitigation
Healthy	<p>Homestart provide support to parents/carers and families to support the health and wellbeing of their children and can also identify potential health issues and make appropriate referrals onto other health services. Removing this support could have an impact on the health of children.</p> <p>Can be mitigated No</p> <p>Justification Although Early Learning and Childcare staffing can receive ongoing guidance and training on promoting children's health and wellbeing, it is acknowledged the ELC staffing have no involvement with 0-2 year olds. Those vulnerable children and parents/carers previously in receipt of support from Homestart will only receive core/statutory services.</p>

Impact Area	Details and Mitigation
Nurtured	<p>In the last monitoring period, there were a total of 423 children supported, with 112 of the children being under the age of 1 and a further 209 being under age 3. In total, there are over 320 who aren't eligible for funded early learning and childcare (unless they meet the criteria for being an eligible 2 year old) . Social isolation and mental health of parents can both concerns be which are addressed through the engagement and support provided by Homestart. The level of support that Homestart provide can have a positive impact on the parent/s ability to provide the nurturing care and attention to their child.</p> <p>Can be mitigated No</p> <p>Justification Although Early Learning and Childcare staffing can receive ongoing guidance and training on creating nurturing learning environments and experiences, it is acknowledged the ELC staffing have no involvement with 0-2 year olds. Those vulnerable children and parents/ carers previously in receipt of support from Homestart will only receive core/statutory services.</p>
Safe	<p>As Homestart can be the only engagement from a service that a family may have with the exception of Health Visitors, then there is a risk that potential child protection concerns who are vulnerable, could be missed. Homestart are able to work with families, build a relationship and signpost where it is required. They provide a valuable early intervention and prevention service.</p> <p>Can be mitigated No</p> <p>Justification Although Early Learning and Childcare staffing can receive ongoing guidance and training on supporting vulnerable children and families, it is acknowledged the ELC staffing have no involvement with 0-2 year olds. Those vulnerable children and parents/carers previously in receipt of support from Homestart will only receive core/statutory services.</p>

4.4. Evidence

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
External Data	Homestart returns	A high number of parents benefit in being able to better support their children.	That parents become better equipped and more confident in supporting and nurturing their child's development.

4.5. Accounting for the Views of Children and Young People

The views of children haven't been taken account of in relation to this proposal.

4.6. Promoting the Wellbeing of Children and Young People

The activity doesn't support this.

4.7. Upholding Children and Young People's Rights

Not applicable

4.8. Overall Outcome

No Negative Impacts Can Be Mitigated.

At this point in the process and taking into account the implications of stopping the funding, it isn't possible to state that the negative impacts can be mitigated.

Aberdeenshire Council have no statutory duty to provide a home-service to children and parents. The Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care Partnership (AHSCP) has responsibility for the health visiting service who deliver a core home visiting programme for all families and act as the Named Person under the national GIRFEC policy and practice model.

Aberdeenshire Council provide Early Learning and Childcare with eligible 2 year olds and all 3-5 year olds entitled to access 1140 provision. ELC staffing are also trained and skilled in working with vulnerable children and parents and will refer into partner agencies for targeted and specialise support as appropriate and required. Given the ongoing financial challenges being faced by both the Early Years service and the wider Council, the proposal is to terminate the funding of an externally provided, non-statutory service to protect the funding and delivery of the EY service's core function and responsibility.

5. Equalities and Fairer Scotland Duty Impact Assessment

5.1. Protected Groups

Indicator	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
Age (Younger)			Yes	
Age (Older)		Yes		
Disability		Yes		
Race		Yes		
Religion or Belief		Yes		
Sex			Yes	
Pregnancy and Maternity			Yes	
Sexual Orientation		Yes		
Gender Reassignment		Yes		
Marriage or Civil Partnership		Yes		

5.2. Socio-economic Groups

Indicator	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
Low income			Yes	
Low wealth			Yes	
Material deprivation		Yes		
Area deprivation		Yes		
Socioeconomic background		Yes		

5.3. Negative Impacts and Mitigations

Impact Area	Details and Mitigation

Impact Area	Details and Mitigation
Age (Younger)	<p>Given that Homestart work with families with children who are aged 0 to 5 years old, the removal of such a service will only impact negatively on this age range. For many families, engagement with Homestart may be the only support that they have with the exception of Health Visitors.</p> <p>Can be mitigated No</p> <p>Justification Aberdeenshire Council EY service will continue to provide ELC to all 3-5 year olds and to eligible 2 year olds and will continue to provide support to those children and parents/families, working in partnership with other agencies. Most of the children/families currently supported by Homestart will move into ELC provision over the course of the 3-year phasing out of funding and will therefore be supported through this universal service, from where referrals can be made into partner agencies and services as required. All 0-5 years olds will also receive support from the AHSCP health visiting service and the Health Visitor / Named Person will be able to initiate multi-agency action planning where required. The negative impact can be partially mitigated by the continuation of core/statutory services but it is acknowledged that the removal of this enhanced service will impact on children going forward.</p>

Impact Area	Details and Mitigation
<p>Pregnancy and Maternity</p>	<p>Out of the 423 children that Homestart supported during their last monitoring period (September to November 2023), 112 of the children were under the age of 1. Removing the service will impact on pregnant and new mothers.</p> <p>Can be mitigated No</p> <p>Justification Although there will be a continuation of core/statutory maternity and health services available to pregnant women, removing this enhanced early intervention service will have an impact that cannot be mitigated by Aberdeenshire Council. It is further acknowledged that other statutory services are experiencing the same financial challenges and cannot be expected to mitigate such impacts either. There may be opportunities for Homestart to explore alternative funding streams over the 3-year phasing out of funding and Aberdeenshire Council can provide some support regarding this.</p>
<p>Sex</p>	<p>It will be women/mothers who are mainly impacted on given the nature of the work that Homestart undertakes and the support that they provide.</p> <p>Can be mitigated No</p> <p>Justification Aberdeenshire Council EY service will continue to provide ELC to all 3-5 year olds and to eligible 2 year olds and will continue to provide support to those children and their mothers, working in partnership with other agencies. Most of the children/mothers currently supported by Homestart will move into ELC provision over the course of the 3-year phasing out of funding and will therefore be supported through this universal service, from where referrals can be made into partner agencies and services as required. All 0-5 years olds and their mothers will also receive support from the AHSCP health visiting service and the Health Visitor / Named Person will be able to initiate multi-agency action planning where required. The negative impact can be partially mitigated by the continuation of core/statutory services but it is acknowledged that the removal of this enhanced service will impact on children and their mothers going forward.</p>

Impact Area	Details and Mitigation
<p>Low income</p>	<p>Homestart have had referrals related to those struggling with managing the household budget. They will provide support in relation to income maximisation and also signpost to relevant services who can support families. They will also provide advice and guidance on household money management. Removing the service will have an impact on those parents/families.</p> <p>Can be mitigated No</p> <p>Justification The EY service can collaborate with Homestart and other Council services over the 3 year funding phasing out to develop a resource pack for parents/families signposting to advice and guidance on income maximisation. Further, some 2 year olds will be eligible for 1140 access due to family income circumstances. However, the impact on 0-2 years old cannot be fully mitigated by Aberdeenshire Council.</p>
<p>Low wealth</p>	<p>Homestart have had referrals related to those struggling with managing the household budget. They will provide support in relation to income maximisation and also signpost to relevant services who can support families. They will also provide advice and guidance on household money management. Removal of the service will have an impact on those parents/families.</p> <p>Can be mitigated No</p> <p>Justification The EY service can collaborate with Homestart and other Council services over the 3 year funding phasing out to develop a resource pack for parents/families signposting to advice and guidance on income maximisation. Further, some 2 year olds will be eligible for 1140 access due to family income circumstances. However, the impact on 0-2 years old cannot be fully mitigated by Aberdeenshire Council.</p>

5.4. Evidence

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
<p>External Data</p>	<p>Homestart returns</p>	<p>That there are a multitude of reasons that families will refer or be referred to Homestart. On average each family has 5 areas that they are struggling with i.e. mental health, household budget, feeling isolated etc.</p>	<p>Homestart provide a valuable and low cost early intervention/prevention service. They recruit, train and coordinate volunteers which reduces the cost of provision.</p>

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
External Consultation	Homestart feedback forms	<p>Homestart carries out consultation with families on the impact of the services provided by Homestart. For the last monitoring period (September to November 2023), the following key points were evidenced:</p> <p>Summary of the impact of the service for children and their family.</p> <p>79% Number of families reported feeling less isolated.</p> <p>81% number of parents reported improved self-esteem.</p> <p>72% Number who felt better able to cope with their mental ill health.</p> <p>69% number who reported being more able to cope with managing their household budget.</p> <p>83% Number who felt better able to manage their child's behaviour.</p> <p>84% Number who felt more involved in their child's learning and development.</p>	That for such a widespread and low cost service, Homestart has a significant impact on families.

5.5. Engagement with affected groups

There hasn't been any engagement children and parents/families who are or would be accessing the service.

5.6. Ensuring engagement with protected groups

N/A

5.7. Evidence of engagement

N/A

5.8. Overall Outcome

No Negative Impacts Can Be Mitigated.

The majority of families who seek support from Homestart, aren't engaging with other services and aren't accessing Early Learning and Childcare. Homestart is providing a support service that meets a need that as far as is understood isn't provided by any Council services or any other third sector organisations.

Further Aberdeenshire Council have no statutory duty to provide a home-service to children and parents. The Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care Partnership (AHSCP) has responsibility for the health visiting service who deliver a core home visiting programme for all families and act as the Named Person under the national GIRFEC policy and practice model.

Aberdeenshire Council provide Early Learning and Childcare with eligible 2 year olds and all 3-5 year olds entitled to access 1140 provision. ELC staffing are also trained and skilled in working with vulnerable children and parents and will refer into partner agencies for targeted and specialist support as appropriate and required.

Given the ongoing financial challenges being faced by both the Early Years service and the wider Council, the proposal is to terminate the funding of an externally provided, non-statutory service to protect the funding and delivery of the EY service's core function and responsibility. The funding will be phased out over 3 years to allow for transition planning, securing alternative funding and to partially mitigate the impact on children and families.

5.9. Improving Relations

Engagement with Homestart and those agencies and services who refer and receive referrals from Homestart would be a key way to build the good relations. Also focus groups with those accessing the services.

5.10. Opportunities of Equality

The saving proposal wont advance equality of opportunity.

6. Health Inequalities Impact Assessment

6.1. Health Behaviours

Indicator	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
Healthy eating			Yes	
Exercise and physical activity			Yes	
Substance use – tobacco		Yes		
Substance use – alcohol		Yes		
Substance use – drugs		Yes		
Mental health			Yes	

6.2. Negative Impacts and Mitigations

Impact Area	Details and Mitigation
Exercise and physical activity	<p>negative impact on health eating and exercise and physical activity due to Homestart coordinating the HENRY Programme.</p> <p>Can be mitigated Yes</p> <p>Mitigation With the scoping exercise and the opportunity for Homestart to increase funding avenues as Aberdeenshire Council funding gradually decreases, this gives the opportunity to allow for Homestart to continue to support the HENRY programme. Their work with HENRY is not directly funded by Aberdeenshire Council but comes from other funding sources.</p> <p>Timescale January to August 2025</p>
Healthy eating	<p>Negative impact on health eating and exercise and physical activity due to Homestart coordinating the HENRY Programme.</p> <p>Can be mitigated Yes</p> <p>Mitigation With the scoping exercise and the opportunity for Homestart to increase funding avenues as Aberdeenshire Council funding gradually decreases, this gives the opportunity to allow for Homestart to continue to support the HENRY programme. Their work with HENRY is not directly funded by Aberdeenshire Council but comes from other funding sources.</p> <p>Timescale January to August 2025</p>

Impact Area	Details and Mitigation
Mental health	<p>Over 80% of families who engage with Homestart are struggling with mental health issues.</p> <p>Can be mitigated No</p> <p>Justification It is acknowledged that Aberdeenshire Council cannot mitigate this impact through our core/statutory services. However, by phasing out the funding over 3 years, we can support Homestart to access alternative funding. Further, ELC provision will continue to provide support to children and their families, making referrals to specialist services as required. However, it is acknowledged that this impact cannot be fully mitigated</p>

6.3. Evidence

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
External Consultation	Feedback surveys	That a significant proportion of referrals relate to mental health. Also, a significant proportion benefit in terms of improved mental health outcomes.	Removal of the service will have an adverse impact on those parents struggling with mental health challenges.

6.4. Overall Outcome

No Negative Impacts Can Be Mitigated.

Although children and their families are supported by core/statutory services, it is acknowledged that there is no equivalent to the enhanced service that Homestart provide. Aberdeenshire Council can continue to work with Homestart and other Third Sector organisations to support vulnerable children and families but cannot continue to fund non-statutory services at the detriment of our core service functions. The phasing out of funding should mitigate some impacts but not all impacts for all children/families can be mitigated.

Further, Aberdeenshire Council have no statutory duty to provide a home-service to children and parents. The Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care Partnership (AHSCP) has responsibility for the health visiting service who deliver a core home visiting programme for all families and act as the Named Person under the national GIRFEC policy and practice model.

Aberdeenshire Council provide Early Learning and Childcare with eligible 2 year olds and all 3-5 year olds entitled to access 1140 provision. ELC staffing are also trained and skilled in working with vulnerable children and parents and will refer into partner agencies for targeted and specialist support as appropriate and required.

Given the ongoing financial challenges being faced by both the Early Years service and the wider Council, the proposal is to terminate the funding of an externally provided, non-statutory service to protect the funding and delivery of the EY service's core function and responsibility. The funding will be phased out over 3 years to allow for transition planning, securing alternative funding and to partially mitigate the impact on children and families

7. Action Plan

Planned Action	Details
<p>Planned Action To map out provision - services referring to Homestart and those services who provide support to families.</p>	<p>Lead Officer James Martin</p> <p>Repeating Activity No</p> <p>Planned Start Friday February 28, 2025</p> <p>Planned Finish Friday August 29, 2025</p> <p>Expected Outcome To better understand the implication of withdrawal on funding on services engaging with families.</p> <p>Resource Implications Officer time</p>