

Kent County Council

**Sufficiency Strategy
2013-2015**



Executive Summary

Local Authorities are required to take steps to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for children in care within their local area. In 2010, the Statutory Guidance for the Sufficiency Duty was issued. This guidance is explicit in placing a duty on Local Authorities to act strategically to address gaps in provision by ensuring that they include, in relevant commissioning strategies, their plans for meeting the sufficiency duty.

The Children Act 2008 defines Sufficiency as “a whole system approach which delivers early intervention and preventative work to help support children and their families where possible, as well as providing better services for children if they do become looked after. For those who are looked after, Local Authorities and their Children’s Trust partners should seek to secure a number of providers and a range of services, with the aim of meeting the wide-ranging needs of looked after children and young people within their local area.”

The strategy addresses the needs of children and young people from birth to the age of 21 (or 25 where children’s services continue to have statutory responsibility) including children and young people with disabilities who are, or who may be, accommodated by KCC. It meets the requirements of the sufficiency strategy by collating needs and resource information and market analysis but also describes what needs to happen in relation to work with children in care or children at risk of coming into care.

It is consistent with our pledge to Children in Care (CIC) which is based around six themes:

- A sense of belonging
- An adult who is there for each child in care
- A good education
- Good memories for the future
- Getting ready for being an adult
- Championing each child’s needs and interests

The strategy identifies **four** key strategic objectives, all of which focus on reducing the numbers of children in our care where safe to do so, and using our resources in the most efficient and cost effective way. The document also includes some impact measures which will be monitored to evidence progress on delivery. These are:

Key Objective 1: To intervene early and support children to remain safely within their family

Children’s needs are best served in their own families if this can be safely supported. Helping families stay together must therefore be a key focus for all Children’s Services. Early identification of need and effective early intervention is essential. Early intervention and prevention services can reduce the number of children and young people reaching the threshold for care and needing to become CIC, avoid repeat entry into care or support them to return safely to their families in a timely manner.

Key Objective 2: To manage risk within the family/community

We must manage risk effectively with families that are approaching the threshold for care, and work to ensure the right children come into care at the right times, and are supported to leave at the right time. We will provide a range of effective interventions which support families to make changes whilst always ensuring that children and young people are kept safe.

Key Objective 3: Provide and commission placements to meet identified needs

We need to be sure that we have the right range of placements to meet the assessed needs of CIC. As a result of rising numbers of CIC, we need to focus on increasing capacity in our in-house fostering service in Kent, and develop strong partnerships with our Independent Fostering and Residential Providers to promote choice stability and value for money.

Key Objective 4: Good Care Planning

Having a clear Care Plan in place is essential for children and young people in care, not only to ensure that they come into and exit care at the right times, but to meet our statutory obligations under the Care Planning Regulations. We need to ensure that children do not 'drift' through care, but have clearly-planned processes which allow them to be reunited with family and friends where possible, have stable, supported and well matched placements with alternative carers and exit the care system in a timely and positive way at whatever age this happens.

A detailed Action Plan has been developed to support implementation of the strategy, which will be supported over the next two years.

The following impact measures have been identified as the key indicators of the success of the strategy and will be closely monitored and reported on formally every six months for the duration of the strategy:

- Overall Number of CIC
- Current and Projected Spend on placements with independent providers
- Number of Children beginning/ceasing to be CIC per month, by area and age band
- Proportion of Residential, In house Fostering, IFA fostering and supported living placements
- Numbers of CIC placed for adoption and made subject of SGO
- Level of capacity, referrals to and actual placements made in in-house foster service
- Net gain of in-house foster placements by locality and placement type
- Decrease in the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation for 16/17 year olds presenting as homeless.

The strategy contains supporting background data in relation to the needs of Kent's CIC, and the current provision accessed by those CIC. This meets our responsibilities to undertake a review of sufficiency, and sets the context for the development of a detailed commissioning strategy.