

From: Peter Oakford, Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services

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To: Children's Social Care & Health Cabinet Committee

9 July 2014

Subject: Kent County Council Sufficiency Strategy - Update

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: None

Future Pathway of Paper: None

Electoral Division: All

Summary: KCC's Sufficiency Strategy, approved by Cabinet in July 2013 was developed in response to the Governments' Sufficiency Duty which came into force in April 2011. The action plan that accompanied the strategy identified actions which KCC had to deliver in order to meet its responsibilities under the Sufficiency duty.

KCC has made good progress against these actions. We are now preparing to review the strategy, in order to ensure the authority continues to meet its statutory duties in the light of recent legislative changes, and to continue to improve quality and efficiency and deliver maximum value and the best possible outcomes for vulnerable children and young people.

Included in this report will be:

- Brief review of Sufficiency responsibilities
- Local Drivers
- National Drivers
- Progress against action plan
- Sufficiency Strategy Review

Recommendation The Cabinet Committee is asked to NOTE the work undertaken on the Sufficiency Strategy and the Action Plan.

1. Brief review of Sufficiency responsibilities

- 1.1. Sufficiency duty applies to all children who are defined as 'looked after' under the 1989 act, as well as those who are at risk of care or custody, (children and young people on the 'edge of care')
- 1.2. Section 22G of the Children Act 1989 requires Local Authorities to take steps to secure, so far as reasonably practical, sufficient accommodation within the authorities area which meets the needs of children the Local Authority is looking after, and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation that is in the Local Authorities area (the sufficiency duty).
- 1.3. The Sufficiency Statutory Guidance states that Local Authority provision should enable children:
 - a) To live near their family home;
 - b) To remain in their current education or training setting;
 - c) Where appropriate, to be placed with siblings;
 - d) With a disability to have their needs met; and
 - e) Wherever it is safe to do so, to remain in their own Local Authority area.
- 1.4. Where it is at all possible, this provision should be provided within the Local Authority area and should be accompanied by a commissioning strategy that outlines the authority's commissioning intentions and approach to meeting local need.
- 1.5. The new Ofsted inspection framework considers whether the authority's response to meeting its 'sufficiency duty' is robust enough. The authority should be able to evidence that they are taking steps to meet the sufficiency duty as far "as reasonably practicable". These steps will include evidence of an appropriate needs analysis and commissioning strategy to meet the needs of vulnerable children.

2. Local Drivers

- 2.1. KCC is committed to not only making good quality placements and meeting the needs of looked after children but coordinating activity across agencies with a clear focus on keeping families together, where it is safe to do so and minimise the number of children coming into care.

- 2.2. This approach is consistent with the Children's Social Care Transformation Programme Plan. The objectives outlined in this report compliment the County Council's vision and ambitions as set out in Facing the Challenge.

3. National Drivers

- 3.1 A number of guidance documents have been produced by Government that look at sufficiency and care planning, placement and case review. These documents set out how local authorities should carry out their responsibilities in relation to care planning, placement and review for children in care.
- 3.2. These changes in regulation (see appendix 1) have a number of implications in particular for safeguarding and operational staff. Processes are being developed to ensure that KCC responds to these legislative changes in an appropriate way.
- 3.3. In terms of sufficiency, the Staying Put agenda has significant implications both for carers (in terms of rates of payment and the potential loss of a registered bed for up to 3 years) and also for KCC, in terms of the loss of foster care beds and potential increase in costs over the existing 16 plus accommodation arrangements.

4. Progress against Action Plan

- 4.1. The Sufficiency Strategy action plan is broken down into 4 key strategic objectives, with targets within each objective R/A/G rated to indicate progress. Appendix 2 gives specific detail of progress against key performance indicators. Highlighted below are general comments on progress in each area.

4.2 Intervene early and support children to remain safely within their family

There are 8 specific targets within this strategic objective.

- 7 green
- 1 red

- 4.3 The only 'red' target, a review of the Early Intervention and Prevention strategy has been delayed whilst a permanent Director of Preventative Services is appointed and will be carried forward to the 2014-2015 action plan.
- 4.4 The remaining 7 targets cover a broad range of activity; progress has been made through the increased use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and Team around the Family (TAF) approach by a

range of multi-agency partners. These tie in with the impact of the Family Intervention work undertaken by the Kent Troubled Families (TF) initiative. A major review of Children's Centres has been completed with a new countywide structure coming into effect from April 2014.

4.5 Commissioned early intervention services have worked with significant numbers of children and families with the impact of these services currently under review.

4.6 Kent Integrated Adolescent Support Services (KIASS) and the Kent Integrated Family Support Service (KIFSS) are working closely together as part of the transformation agenda to deliver services that reduce the number of children and families being referred to social care.

4.7 **Manage risk within the family/community**

There are 5 specific targets within this strategic objective.

- 4 are green
- 1 is amber

4.8 As the confidence and experience of commissioned early help services has grown the number of step-up's to social care has reduced and social care has been able to step-down an increased number of cases to these services. The Safer Stronger Families service has reported a low frequency of young people going into care within 3 months of their intervention.

4.9 KCC's Family Group Conferencing (FGC) has worked with a large number of families on the edge of care to increase their resilience and ability to manage issues within their family environment supported by other services, reducing the number of these families that step-up to social care. The overall rating of their target is green, although the education element is amber (see note in appendix 2)

4.10 Youth Justice and Social Care colleagues are working with the courts to reduce the number of young people remanded to Youth Detention Accommodation targets have been achieved for the last 2 years, demonstrating a downward trend in the remand population being remanded to secure accommodation.

4.11 **Provide and commission placements to meet identified needs.**

There are 6 specific targets within this strategic objective.

- 3 green
- 2 amber
- 1 part of the recruitment and retention foster carers is red

- 4.12 Using a range of data, including information from social care and the Access to Resources Team (ART), fostering has successfully targeted recruitment at a number of carers who are prepared to work with children KCC finds difficult to place. Work has also been undertaken with existing carers to ensure their registrations and profiles are up to date and correctly reflect the types of children they wish to work with. Recruitment of carers for challenging and 16+ placements has proven challenging and remains an area of focus for the next action plan
- 4.13 The IFA (Independent Fostering Agency) framework has been in place since June 2013; this has improved the search process for private sector prices and led to a decrease in the average cost of an independent fostering placement of approximately £25 per week.
- 4.14 A pilot, initially with North and West Kent area fostering teams and from January 2014 with the countywide in-house fostering service has led to a reduction in the use of IFA and spot (private sector placement made outside the framework) placements and maximised the usage of KCC in-house carers. The table below shows:

Fig. 1

Quarter	July to September 2013	October to December 2013	January to March 2014
IFA	70	39	23
Spot	22	7	4

- 4.15 KCC has recently joined the West Sussex Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS), a framework for the provision of residential education provision. These arrangements are at an early stage and data on the impact on cost of placements is not available, however the DPS has provided details of providers that KCC had not previously worked with.
- 4.16 **Good care planning to improve stability and reduce drift.**
- There are 9 specific targets within this strategic objective:
- 4 green
 - 4 amber
 - 1 is no longer part of this plan
- 4.17 Support and training has been delivered for social care staff across the county as part of the professional development programme. The IRO service has seen an improvement in the quality of care planning with the proportion of plans deemed satisfactory or better up to 81% at the end of

March 2014 (up from 65% in September 2012). More plans are being completed within the child's timeframe (up 3.7% to 84.8%).

- 4.19 District surgeries have been well received by social care colleagues. An analysis is underway to determine impact of these surgeries on practice. This will allow for a more targeted approach within the localities and augment identified local need. Care Planning and Pathway Plans will become a focus of surgeries from September to December 2014.

5. Sufficiency Strategy Review

- 5.1 There will be ongoing review and enhancement of the Sufficiency Strategy as the council continues its Transformation of Children's Services. Additionally, evidence from authorities recently inspected under the new Ofsted framework indicates that sufficiency may be an area of focus for inspectors, particularly at 16 plus. Both Essex and Derbyshire have combined their sufficiency strategy, placements plan and commissioning plan which is something for KCC to consider when the current strategy is updated. The new strategy will also reflect changes in legislation (see section 3).
- 5.2 The strategy will address the challenges set out in 'Facing the Challenge' contributing to KCC's journey to becoming a commissioning authority. Preparatory work has already begun on the strategy review but a number of key milestones need to be completed in order to ensure the strategy can support the most efficient and effective service delivery for vulnerable children and young people in Kent.

Action	By When
Annual report to Children's Health and Social Care cabinet committee	9 July 2014
Review of Joint Planning and Partnership board housing protocol	August 2014
16-25 Accommodation Needs Analysis	August 2014
Outcome of CAF, Early Help review	September 2014
Initial assessment of the impact of the West Sussex DPS model	September 2014
IFA Framework review	September 2014
First draft of new sufficiency strategy	September 2014

6. Summary

- 6.1 KCC has made good progress against the key actions from the sufficiency strategy action plan. Changes to legislation and the authorities' transformation agenda mean that the current strategy requires a detailed review with a corresponding, robust action plan to continue to ensure KCC

delivers against its statutory requirements and provides high quality, best value services for vulnerable children.

7. Recommendation

Recommendation:

The Children's Social Care & Health Cabinet Committee is asked to NOTE the work undertaken on the Sufficiency Strategy and the Action Plan.

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Sufficiency Strategy – Changes in Regulations

Appendix 2 – Action Plan – Progress so far, June 2014

9. Background Documents

None

10. Contact details

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