

By Peter Oakford, Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services

Andrew Ireland, Corporate Director of Social Care, Health and Wellbeing

To: Corporate Parenting Panel – 20 January 2017

Subject: **REVIEW AND UPDATE OF THE SUFFICIENCY, PLACEMENTS AND COMMISSIONING STRATEGY - 2015-2018**

Classification: Unrestricted

Electoral Divisions: All

Summary: Provides the Corporate Parenting Panel with an outline of the key issues identified to progress with the reviewing and updating of the Sufficiency, Placements and Commissioning Strategy.

Recommendation: Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to **ENDORSE** the proposal to review and update the Sufficiency, Placements and Commissioning Strategy 2015-2018.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Corporate Parenting Panel endorsed the Sufficiency, Placements and Commissioning Strategy 2015-2018 and this was implemented in summer 2015. Two progress reports have been presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel since its implementation.
- 1.2 The Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting has implemented a review of the Sufficiency Strategy to ensure it is still meeting Ofsted requirements, and for the strategy to be updated to reflect the current and future demand, including our current and future accommodation offer for our most vulnerable children and young people from entering care through to transition.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 The authority makes a significant financial commitment to meet its statutory responsibilities to provide a sufficiency of accommodation for Children in Care (CiC) and Care Leavers. In particular, the cost of residential placements, independent fostering agency placements and semi-independent/shared accommodation is significant.
- 2.2 It should be noted that all placements are subject to review at the Assistant Director level through the Access to Resource Panels.

3. Purpose of the Review

- 3.1 To establish a total picture of our accommodation offer for Children in Care and Care Leavers, whilst ensuring the Council is meeting its Sufficiency duties.
- 3.2 Establish appropriate links with the Children and Young People Outcomes Framework.
- 3.3 Enable the Council to plan a more effective and efficient approach to our future accommodation offer.

4. Key Issues for Updating the Strategy

- 4.1 Analyse and learn from other authorities Sufficiency Strategies where they have been deemed as good by Ofsted.
- 4.2 The newly appointed Adoption and Fostering County Managers have, since coming into post, written their recruitment strategies. These take into consideration future need along with a review of the numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). These recruitment strategies need to be linked to the Sufficiency Strategy.
- 4.3 The Children's Commissioning Unit will lead on developing the Sufficiency Strategy to ensure it provides the Council and the public with its full accommodation offer. The following accommodation is in scope:

- Fostering
- Childrens Homes
- Residential Special Schools
- Short Break Units
- Supported Accommodation in a Family Environment
- Semi-Independent Accommodation with Support
- Shared Accommodation (Independent)
- Reception Centres
- Safety Pods

- 4.4 This work will include an analysis of each of the above accommodations on:

- Demand – current and projected.
- Needs – which children and young people need this accommodation, and the right provision against need.
- Supply – market effectiveness and quality of provision e.g. Ofsted ratings.
- Finance – overall spend with providers, including average costs of placements.
- Interdependencies and related strategies – links to other work streams, the national dispersal scheme and opportunities, e.g. innovation bids.

5. A Review of Current Performance - Sufficiency, Placements and Commissioning Strategy (2015-18)

5.1 The Sufficiency Strategy outlines four challenges, delivery of which is measured by the achievement against the eight measures, as set out in Appendix 1. Delivery of these four challenges will continue to be reported on whilst the Strategy and the wider accommodation offer for looked after children and young people are reviewed.

5.2 Our approach to meeting the Council’s responsibilities to provide secure, safe and appropriate accommodation to Children in Care and Care Leavers is centred around the five strategic levers that we believe will deliver improvements to sufficiency in Kent. These are:

1. Enhancing early help, prevention and partnership working
2. Further developing in-house foster care services
3. Continuously improving quality of care
4. Market engagement
5. Continuing to build organisational effectiveness

5.3 The table outlined below provides a summary of the challenges and supporting measures outlined in the Sufficiency Strategy, which have been in place now for a year. As we move forward with a review of the Sufficiency Strategy it is possible that these may change to reflect the challenges current being faced by the Council in meeting the sufficiency duty.

Table 1: Sufficiency Strategy – Key Challenges and Supporting Measures

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Challenge 1: The need for effective support and practice to ensure that as many children as possible are able to remain living at home with their families</p> | <p>Measure 1: We will expect to see a reduction in the number of children and young people in Care</p> |
| <p>Challenge 2: Provision of effective support and availability of suitable accommodation to meet the needs of Care Leavers</p> | <p>Measure 2: We expect to see an increase in the percentage of Care Leavers who are living in suitable accommodation</p> |
| <p>Challenge 3: Access to high quality placements that support children in care to have stability and to achieve positive outcomes</p> | <p>Measure 3: We expect to see an increase in the number of children placed within 20 miles of their originating address for children with Disabilities and those in the West of the County</p> <hr/> <p>Measure 4: We expect to see the percentage of children remaining in the same placement for two years to remain stable</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| | Measure 5: We expect to grow and diversify the skill, capability and capacity of our in house foster carers |
| Challenge 4: Quality of practice and support to meet the needs of Children in Care, improving their experience of care and achieving permanence | Measure 6: We expect to see a reduction in the number of Children in Care that have three or more placement moves per year |
| | Measure 7: We expect to see a continued reduction in the length of time it takes between entering care of the Local Authority and an Adoption Order being granted. |
| | Measure 8: An increase in the number of children in permanent long-term fostering placements |

5.4 The current Sufficiency Strategy performance dashboard is attached at Appendix 1. It provides a summary of the current performance (most recent figures as at September 2016) of the eight measures outlined within the strategy.

5.5 On the whole, progress against the eight measures has improved or remained stable, building on a gradually improving picture over the last year. Measure 6 (reduction of placement moves) has seen a slight reduction in performance and work is continuing to reduce the number of children who experience three or more placement moves per year.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 The strategy meets the requirements of the Children’s Act 1989 and all other relevant legislation.

7. Implementation Proposals

7.1 The outcome of the Sufficiency Strategy review and update will be presented to Corporate Parenting Panel in March 2017.

8. Recommendations

8.1 Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to **ENDORSE** the proposal to review and update the Sufficiency, Placements and Commissioning Strategy 2015-2018.

9. Background Documents

Kent County Council's Sufficiency, Placement and Commissioning Strategy, 2015-2018: <http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/childrens-social-care-and-families-policies/children-in-care-sufficiency-strategy>

10. Contact Details

Report Authors

Karen Sharp
Head of Children's Strategic Commissioning
03000 416668
Karen.sharp@kent.gov.uk

Michelle Hall
Commissioning Manager
03000 416189
Michelle.louisehall@kent.gov.uk

Relevant Director

Philip Segurola, Director
Specialist Children's Services
03000 413120
Philip.segurola@kent.gov.uk