

From: Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education
Andrew Ireland, Corporate Director of Social Care, Health and Wellbeing

To: Corporate Parenting Panel – 21 July 2017

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

Classification: Unrestricted

Electoral Divisions: All

Summary: This report 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: Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to **NOTE** the proposal to review and update the Sufficiency, Placements and Commissioning Strategy 2015-2018.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Corporate Parenting Panel endorsed the Sufficiency, Commissioning and Placements Strategy 2015-2018 and this was implemented in summer 2015.
- 1.2 Three progress reports have been presented to Corporate Parenting Panel since its implementation, with the most recent being in January 2017. This report provides the latest update on progress on the current strategy; it outlines steps to develop a refreshed approach to sufficiency strategy and to the commissioning of accommodation for Children in Care (CiC) and Care Leavers.
- 1.3 The Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting has implemented a review of the Sufficiency Strategy to ensure it meets regulatory requirements and for the strategy to be updated to reflect the current and future demand, for current and future accommodation needs.
- 1.4 Since the requirement for a sufficiency strategy was first introduced by government in 2011, Kent has undergone significant change in the numbers of CiC and Care Leavers, including the challenges presented by the significant influx of unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people.
- 1.5 We have recognised that the scope of the Sufficiency Strategy benefits from being extended to include accommodation and support options for Care Leavers and vulnerable 16/17 year olds in addition to CiC, across both Kent's

citizen and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) cohort. This will enable a more thorough approach to planning, for all children within the cohort and engage key multi agency stakeholders including district housing providers and commissioned services (fostering, semi-supported accommodation and shared accommodation provision).

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 The authority makes a significant financial commitment to meet its statutory responsibilities to provide a sufficiency of accommodation for CiC and Care Leavers. Increasing sufficiency includes the provision of residential placements, Independent Fostering Agency placements and semi-independent/shared accommodation.
- 2.2 All placements are subject to review at Assistant Director level, through the Access to Resource Panels.

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

- 3.1 The strategy outlines four challenges, delivery of which is measured by the achievement against the eight measures, as set out at Appendix 1. Delivery of the strategy will continue to be reported on while the Strategy and wider accommodation offer for LAC and young people are reviewed.
- 3.2 The approach to meeting the Council's responsibilities to provide secure, safe and appropriate accommodation to CiC and Care Leavers is centred around the five strategic levers that 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
- 3.3 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 a review of the Sufficiency Strategy moves forward it is likely that these may change to reflect the challenges currently 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 accommodation suitable for their needs</p>
<p>Challenge 3: Access to high quality placements that support CiC 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 as well as those in the west of the county</p>
	<p>Measure 4: We expect to see the percentage of children remaining in the same placement for two years to remain stable</p>
	<p>Measure 5: We expect to grow and diversify the skill, capability and capacity of our in house foster carers</p>
<p>Challenge 4: Quality of practice and support to meet the needs of CiC, improving their experience of care and achieving permanence</p>	<p>Measure 6: We expect to see a reduction in the number of CiC that have three or more placement moves per year</p>
	<p>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.</p>
	<p>Measure 8: We expect to see an increase in the number of children in permanent long term fostering placements</p>

3.4 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.

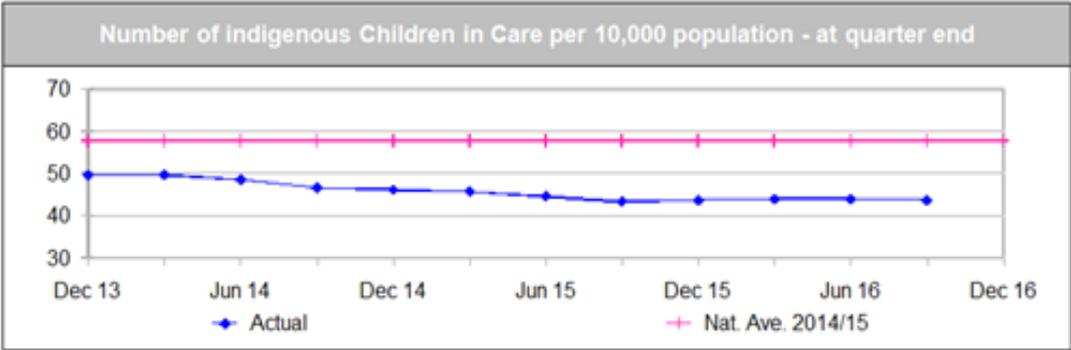
3.5 On the whole, progress against the eight measures has improved or remained stable, building on a gradually improving picture over the last year. Measure 6 (reduction of placement moves) has seen a slight deterioration in performance and work is continuing to reduce the amount of children who experience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

4. Enhancing our Approach to Meeting the Sufficiency Duty

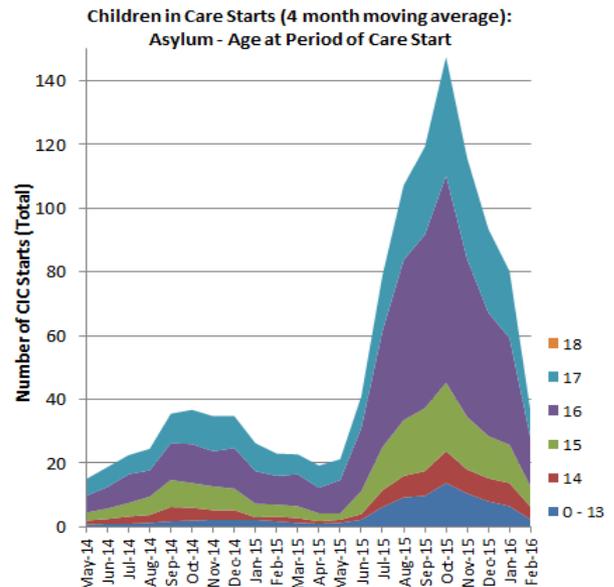
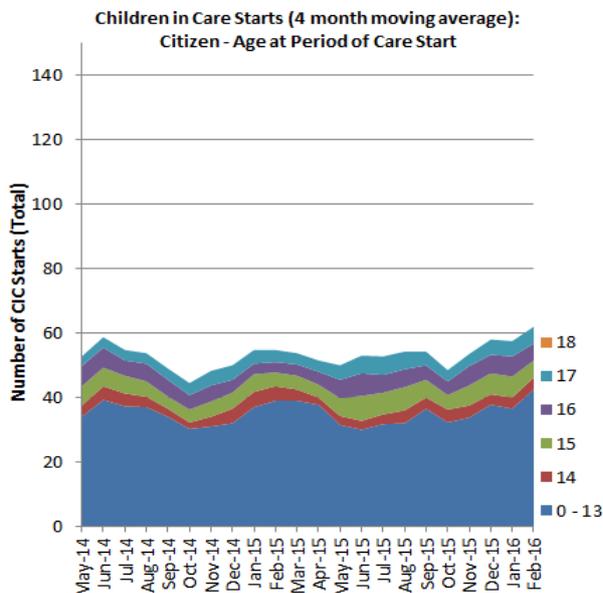
4.1 For three key reasons it has been decided to undertake an interim review of the Sufficiency Strategy. The reasons are:

- 1. The impact of UASC, which has been well documented.
- 2. The recognition that we would benefit from an holistic review of our accommodation offer for CiC, Care Leavers and vulnerable 16/17 year olds.
- 3. Ensuring that appropriate action is taken to ensure there is sufficiency of accommodation and housing for all children who enter care and become Care Leavers

4.2 The number of Looked After Children (LAC) per 10,000 is below the national average and statistical neighbours if UASC are excluded.



4.3 The following charts provide information regarding the number of increased CiC starts in Kent since 2015.



4.4 An interim review document of the Sufficiency Strategy was created by Strategic Business Development and Intelligence in March 2017 and updated in June 2017.

4.5 This document has been produced to update the sufficiency strategy. It includes information on types of accommodation for CiC and Care Leavers and the number of children exiting care through adoption and Special Guardianship Orders. A copy of the interim review document is attached at Appendix 2 to this report.

4.6 This work is beginning to underpin the current commissioning programmes of work which are aimed at ensuring Kent meets its Sufficiency Duty including:

- External fostering placements
- Shared accommodation
- Supported accommodation for older CiC and Care Leavers

4.7 The sufficiency review is aligned to the wider Strategic Review of Accommodation, which informs the commissioning intentions for accommodation. This work is being overseen by the Strategic Commissioning Board to ensure appropriate, timely and efficient contracting is in place for accommodation particularly for Care Leavers and vulnerable young people.

5. Conclusion

5.1 The review of the sufficiency strategy is the Council's approach to meeting the statutory requirement for local authorities to ensure they plan appropriate provision for all LAC and Care Leavers.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Recommendation: Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to **NOTE** 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>

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