

From: Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education
Matt Dunkley, Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education

To: Corporate Parenting Panel – 29 January 2018

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

Classification: Unrestricted

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: The Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to CONSIDER and COMMENT ON the proposal to review and update the Sufficiency, Placements and Commissioning Strategy 2015-2018

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Corporate Parenting Panel supported the Sufficiency, Commissioning and Placements Strategy 2015-2018 and this was implemented in summer 2015.
- 1.2 Four progress reports have been presented to Corporate Parenting Panel since its implementation, with the most recent one being in July 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 and Care Leavers.
- 1.3 In the summer of 2017, the Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting 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. We are now working with our key partners to ensure that this strategy is fit for purpose and reflects the work of all agencies involved in the delivery of accommodation and support services for children and young people.
- 1.4 Since the requirement for a sufficiency strategy was first introduced by Government in 2011, Kent has undergone significant change with the numbers of children in care and care leavers including the challenges presented with the significant rise in numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people in 2015/16.
- 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 Children in Care, across both Kent's Citizen and UASC cohort. This will enable a more integrated 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 of c £31m to meet its statutory responsibilities to provide a sufficiency of accommodation for Children in Care and Care Leavers. Increasing sufficiency includes the provision of residential placements, independent fostering agency placements and semi-independent/shared accommodation. Ensuring the use of the independent sector is achieved at best value for money, supports maintaining placement availability within the agreed cash limit.
- 2.2. All placements made are subject to agreement and review at Assistant Director level through the area 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 we review the Strategy and our wider Accommodation offer for looked after children and young people.
- 3.2 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/development
 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 the duration of the strategy. As we move forward with a review of the Sufficiency it is likely that these may change to reflect the challenges current being faced by the Council in meeting the Sufficiency Duty, and will also reflect the role of Early Help and Preventative Services in dovetailing with Social Care to prevent children and young people becoming looked after.

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 constant number of Children in Care maintained in the context of increased demand and activity</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 independent 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> <hr/> <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 Children in Care , improving their experience of care and achieving permanence</p>	<p>Measure 6: We expect to see a reduction in the number of Children in Care that have three or more placement moves per year</p> <hr/> <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> <hr/> <p>Measure 8: 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 end of September 2017) of the 8 measures outlined within the strategy.
- 3.5 On the whole, progress against the 8 measures has improved or remained stable, building on a gradually improving picture over the last year. There has been a decrease in the performance of measure 3 but the Fostering Service have been addressing this issue, as outlined in 3.6 below, and continue to do so going forward.
- 3.6 In order to improve performance in relation to measure 3 outlined above, Kent Fostering have expanded the Specialist Fostering Team for Disabled Children to enhance the support package that can be offered to foster carers of disabled children. This has enabled the team to facilitate additional workshops, conferences, and training and activity days for children, to improve our retention of our existing carers and promote the recruitment of new carers into the service. To improve the indicator for the West area, Kent Fostering will be doing a targeted recruitment campaign in this area to build up the choice of in house foster placements. The West Kent foster carer ambassadors will be supporting this by identifying local events and community groups that can be targeted with information sessions.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The review of the sufficiency strategy is KCC's approach to meeting the statutory requirement for local authorities to ensure they plan appropriate provision for all looked after children and care leavers.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 The strategy meets the requirements of The Children Act 1989 and all other relevant Legislation.

6. Personnel and Training Implications

- 6.1 There are no personnel and training implications for the review and update of the Sufficiency Strategy.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to CONSIDER and COMMENT ON the proposal to review and update the Sufficiency, Placements and Commissioning Strategy 2015-2018

8. 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>

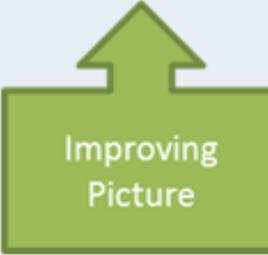
9. Lead Officer

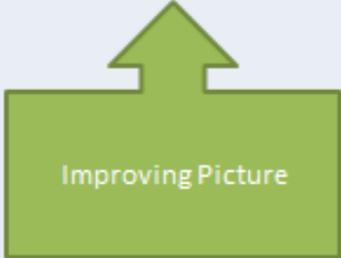
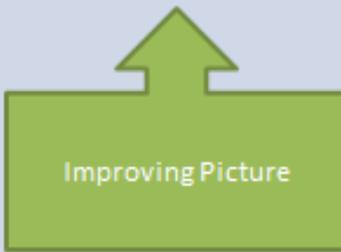
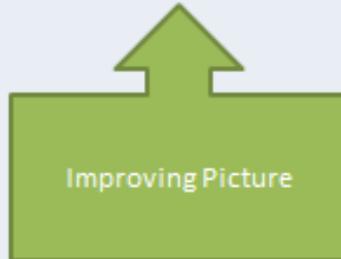
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Appendix One: Sufficiency, Placements and Commissioning Strategy 2015-18 – Performance Summary January 2018

Challenge	Measure	Current Performance	Direction (Since previous quarter)
<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 continued constant number of children in Care in the light of increased activity and demand.</p>	<p>The Citizen LAC population has remained fairly constant over the last six months. The number of UASC entrants into care has remained constant throughout the first two quarters of this year, at 55 starts in each quarter. In March 18, Kent will be required to take up to their national quota again of 0.07% in line with other Local Authorities, on the understanding that the NTS regains traction and young people are transferred in a timely way.</p>	 <p>Remaining Stable</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>At the end of September, 2017, 93.6% of Care Leavers who were contactable are in suitable accommodation, a rise from 91.8% of Care Leavers in March 2017. Ofsted (June 2017) stated "Through a proactive strategic and operational response, leaders have made good progress in increasing the sufficiency of accommodation for the unexpectedly large group of care leavers."</p>	 <p>Improving Picture</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>	<p>Numbers of disabled children being placed within 20 miles of home has remained fairly constant in the last six months to end of September 2017, at around 61 – 65 children at any one time. The numbers of children from the West of the County being placed within 20 miles from their home has decreased from 246 in Sept 16 last year, to 226 this year, a reduction of 10.3%. There is a focus on recruitment of Foster Carers in the West of the County to improve this target.</p>	 <p>Less effective performance</p>
	<p>Measure 4: We expect to see the percentage of children remaining the in the same placement for two years to remain stable</p>	<p>There has been a marginally improving picture over the past three years, with 69.8% of children who have been LAC for at least 2.5 years remaining in the same placement. Short term stability is a focus of work currently in SCS.</p>	 <p>Improving Picture</p>

Challenge	Measure	Current Performance	Direction (Since previous quarter)
Challenge 3: Access to high quality placements that support children in care to have stability and to achieve positive outcomes Challenge 4: Quality of practice and support to meet the needs of Children in Care , improving their experience of care and achieving permanence	Measure 5: We expect to grow and diversify the skill, capability and capacity of our in house foster carers	The % of children placed in KCC foster placements has remained stable with 67% of our CIC (ex UASC) placed in Sept 2015 and 66.1% placed in September 2017	 Remaining Stable
	Measure 6: We expect to see a reduction in the number of Children in Care that have three or more placement moves per year	There has been a decrease in the number of children who have had 3+ placement moves in the last year from 13.4% in Sept 2016 to 10.8% in September 2017. There is currently a sense of stability programme to support carers and further developments are being implemented to support this target.	 Improving Picture
	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	The overall trend shows a clear reduction in the number of days over the last year from 474.8 in Dec 15 to 364.6 in Sept 16, to 303.4 in September 17 which shows a continued level of good progress within the adoption service.	 Improving Picture
	Measure 8: An increase in the number of children in permanent long term fostering placements	There has been an increase in the proportion of children with permanent foster care plans In March 2017 56.6% of the LAC cohort had permanent foster care plans selected in their care plan. In September 2017 this increased to 58.0%.	 Improving Picture