

Children's Services Sufficiency Strategy for Placements and Services for Children in Care, Care Leavers & Disabled Children.

Report of the Chief Officer Children's Services

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

Recommendations: -

That Cabinet: -

- a) Welcome and endorse the Children's Services Sufficiency Strategy for Placements and Services for Children in Care, Care Leavers & Disabled Children and agree arrangements for this report to be published on the Council's website.
- b) Agree to the commissioning intentions set out in the strategy and for contract award decisions to be undertaken through a delegated decision by the Chief Officer for Children's Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services and Schools for Devon County Council for the following contracts: - for Residential Children's Home Framework, Supported Living Options Framework, Residential Block Contract and Residential Short Breaks Contract.

1. Introduction

1.1 As corporate parents, Devon County Council is committed to ensuring children and young people in care achieve the best possible outcomes and are well prepared and supported to step confidently into adulthood with the support they need. Key to this is that when they cannot remain within their family, children and young people are provided with permanence and stability in care in settings which meet their changing needs over time.

1.2 We know from research that maintaining family ties, friendships and education, wherever possible, is crucial and significantly impacts on the likelihood of achieving positive outcomes for children and young people in care. Local provision also makes it easier to engage the full range of local partners in the multi-disciplinary arrangements that are essential to achieving good outcomes.

2. Background

2.1 Section 22G of the Children Act (1989) sets out a 'sufficiency' duty for Local Authorities. 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."

- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 Sufficiency is approached in collaboration with our partners across the area, including our Peninsula Commissioning Partners and other bordering authorities, alongside our local response to national priorities that support different approaches to supporting children in care such as the NHS England demonstrator for children in care with mental health issues through Integrated Personal Commissioning (IPC).
- 2.4 A sufficiency strategy for placements and services for children in care, care leavers and disabled children (Sufficiency Strategy) (Appendix 1) has been produced which is informed by these principles and outlines how we will ensure that children and young people who need to be in care can grow up in high quality provision that is well matched to and effectively meets their immediate and long-term needs and provides them with stability and permanence at the earliest opportunity.
- 2.5 This sufficiency strategy also describes Devon's ambitions and how we will achieve the best for our children and young people in care, disabled children and care leavers in light of our understanding of their needs, now and in the future and of local provision. It links to the Council's wider strategy for children in care, which also sets out Devon's Corporate Parenting arrangements and position on other significant areas, such as how we achieve permanence for our children in care and meet the needs of care leavers.

3. Developing the Sufficiency Strategy

- 3.1 We have been listening to our Children in Care and working with providers and practitioners to determine the priorities for the sufficiency strategy. A stage of further engagement was undertaken with the final draft of the strategy during September and October 2018 to allow us to test if the priorities we have set out address the issues that children and young people have been raised with us. At a partnership level we have shared the strategy with the Joint Commissioning Group of the Devon Children and Families Partnership and the Peninsula Commissioning Board. Providers have also been invited to test the commissioning intentions set out within the strategy.
- 3.2 The strategy was reviewed as part of a Scrutiny Liaison Autumn Briefing session with members in October 2018.
- 3.3 The Children's Services Sufficiency Strategy which is brought before Cabinet for endorsement, encapsulates key findings from data concerning services and placements for children in care, care leavers and disabled children relating to 2017/18 and aims to identify what is working well and commissioning intentions and priorities for development going forward. It is intended that this strategy be reviewed and refreshed on an annual basis.

4. Financial Considerations

- 4.1 The Sufficiency Strategy sets commissioning intentions for 2018/ 19 and 19/20. This includes: -

- Framework Agreement with providers of placements within Residential Children's Homes. This will be a Peninsula contract with 4 neighbouring authorities. Devon County Council's contributions to this contract will be in the region of £12 million per year.
- Framework Agreement for Supported Living Options for the provision of accommodation and support for young people aged 16 and above who are Children in Care or Care Leavers. The value of this contract will be in the region of £14 million over a 4-year period.
- Block contract to secure residential beds in Devon to the proposed value of £10.78 million over a 5-year period.
- Some Residential Short Breaks Services. These services will be funded by Devon County Council and NEW Devon CCG and South Devon & Torbay CCG. The value over a 5-year period is estimated to be £6.5 million.

4.2 It is recommended in agreeing the strategy that the above contracts will be awarded through Delegated Decision by Lead Portfolio Holder and Chief Officer.

5. Environmental Impact Considerations

5.1 There are no specific environmental related issues arising from the sufficiency strategy.

6. Equality Considerations

6.1 Where relevant to the decision, the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty requires decision makers to give due regard to the need to: -

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- Foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

6.2 In considering equality impacts we need to take into account age, disability, race/ethnicity (including Gypsies and Travellers), gender and gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women/ new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage/civil partnership status, in coming to a decision. A decision maker may also consider other relevant factors such as caring responsibilities, rural isolation or socioeconomic disadvantage.

6.3 An Impact Assessment have been completed. This has been included for consideration for the purpose of this item. This assessment highlights the potential for commissioning intentions and priorities identified within the Sufficiency Strategy for Children's Services to achieve positive social impacts for Devon's children in care, care leavers and disabled children and economic impacts for Devon as a whole.

7. Legal Considerations

7.1 There are no specific legal considerations at this time resulting from the production of the sufficiency strategy for Children's Services.

8. Risk Management Considerations

8.1 There are no specific risks to manage or consider at this time resulting from the production of the sufficiency strategy for Children's Services.

9. Public Health Impact

None

10. Conclusion

10.1 A sufficiency strategy for Children's Services has been produced that is informed by the principles we hold as corporate parents and that responds to the 'sufficiency duty' held by Local Authorities outlined in section 2 of this report. The sufficiency strategy outlines how we will ensure that children and young people who need to be in care can grow up in high quality provision that is well matched to and effectively meets their immediate and long-term needs and provides them with stability and permanence at the earliest opportunity. It also describes Devon's ambitions and how we will achieve the best for our children and young people in care, disabled children and care leavers in light of our understanding of their needs, now and in the future and of local provision.

10.2 Therefore, it is recommended that Cabinet: -

10.2.1 Endorse the Children's Services Sufficiency Strategy for Placements and Services for Children in Care, Care Leavers & Disabled Children and agree arrangements for this report to be published on the Council's website.

10.2.2 Agree to the commissioning intentions set out in the strategy and for contract award decisions to be undertaken through a delegated decision by the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services and Schools for Devon County Council and the Chief Officer for the following contracts: - for Residential Childrens Home Framework, Supported Living Options Framework, Residential Block Contract and Residential Short Breaks Contract.

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Children's Services: Councillor James McInnes

Chief Officer for Childrens Services: Jo Olsson

Head of Commissioning Childrens Services: Fiona Fleming

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Contact for Enquiries: Fiona Fleming, Head of Commissioning,

BACKGROUND PAPER



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Strategy Impact Asse

Impact Assessment:

Appendix 1: Sufficiency Strategy (attached)