

Sufficiency & Commissioning Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers 2018-21

Lindsey Herring, Children's Commissioner

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Local Authority Duty

The council has a duty, as stated in section 22G of the Children Act 1989, to take steps to secure, as far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for looked after children within their local authority area.

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Sufficiency & Commissioning Strategy

- The Strategy was updated in June 2019, to reflect challenges during 2018/19 and to capture actions to address these.
- Sets out Durham's strategic approach to securing sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of our looked after children and Care Leavers.
 - Draws together findings, research and analysis
 - Explores likely changes in the overall population and care population
 - Identifies the on-going and future needs of children in care and care leavers for whom we need to develop additional provision.

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What does the Strategy tell us?

- Projected 4.2% growth in Durham's population by 2026 and the number of children aged 0-15 is predicted to rise by 5.5% over the next 10 years
- Number of children in need has increased by 25% (between 2014 and 2019)
- 20.3% increase in the number of children looked after between March 2016 and March 2019
- Durham's rate of looked after children continues to remain below the regional and statistical neighbour rates but is higher than the national average rate.

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What does the Strategy tell us?

- The majority of our children looked after (63%) live in foster care provision (49% in-house; 14% external)
- 73% of our foster carers are aged 40-59 years old with 20% aged 60+
- We continue to have a reliance on foster placements with the independent market, with 120 placements at the end of March 2019
- Fostering to Adopt is now part of Durham's Permanency Strategy – which seeks to reduce the number of placement moves. During 2018/19, 7 children were placed in fostering to adopt placements

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What does the Strategy tell us?

- We have gaps in our residential homes offer – particularly for young people who are very complex and require smaller homes to meet their needs
- The number of external residential placements made in 2018/19 (45) has increased, in comparison to 2017/18 (28) - demonstrating the greater demand for residential provision and the increasing complexities of our children and young people who can not be accommodated in foster care

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What does the Strategy tell us?

- Due to the complexity of some of our children and young people and issues sourcing regulated provision we have placed a small number of children in 'unregulated placements' (none since May 2019)
- We have a range of universal accommodation and support options for care leavers (aged 16+) but need to broaden our options for young people who have needs that challenge services and often need to live on their own with support.

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Actions?

- Placements Team are using CCIRAG, an online platform which provides an overview of all regulated provision nationally and makes us more efficient in identifying suitable placements
- Improved the quality of information that we share with providers when looking for placements – strength based, balanced, signs of safety risk assessments

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Actions?

- Development of 'Multi-Agency Collaborative Care' meeting (MACC) – greater senior management oversight of C/YP with learning disabilities or autism with associated mental health needs, young people at risk of being admitted to specialist hospitals. Provides a planned, coordinated and integrated approach to risk management, ensuring robust support or care packages are in place

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Actions?

- We have developed a new smaller children's residential home with a provider. A further 2 x commissioned homes are planned
- Have agreement to develop an in-house smaller therapeutic home and to re-provide our home on the Aycliffe site
- We are reviewing our Residential Homes offer – reshaping services in line with our needs
- Continue to work with external providers to shape the market and develop services which meet our needs and address gaps in provision
- Identified additional supported living options for YP aged 16+ who need to live on their own to ensure sufficiency of placement choice

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Actions?

- Our Edge of Care Service continues to support young people to remain at home with their families
- We are developing further support options for children in placement and on the edge of care
- Continue to recruit new foster carers
- Increase adopters for older children, siblings and children with disabilities and continue to work in partnership to implement the 'Coast to Coast' Regional Adoption Agency

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Questions.....

Further information contact:

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