

# **Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Children Looked After and Care Leavers 2020-2023**

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# Introduction

- The Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy sets out Durham's strategic approach to securing sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of our looked after children and care leavers.
- 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.
- The updated strategy covers a three year period (2020-2023) and particularly focuses on the ongoing challenges, gaps in services / provision and the actions identified to address these.
- The number of children looked after by the Local Authority which has risen by 51% from 605 in 2014 to 914 as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020, with 954 children looked after as of the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

# Key Priorities

## Objective 1 - Grow our number of in-house foster carers and reduce our reliance on independent foster care provision

- Recruit 30 new foster carer households in 2021/22 and a further 30 in 2022/23
- Carry out targeted foster carer recruitment so we are able to care for more teenagers and sibling groups
- We will develop respite foster carer provision which will support the stability of our placements
- We will seek to reduce the dependency on IFA provision by developing and implementing strategies to recruit in-house, local foster carers and maximise in-house provision

## Objective 2 – Increase the number of adopters

- To work in partnership with Together for Children, Cumbria Council and Voluntary Adoption Agencies to develop and roll out the 'Coast to Coast' regional adoption agency which will be hosted by Cumbria County Council.

# Key Priorities

## Objective 3 - Continue to develop and broaden our residential homes offer and maximise opportunities with external providers

- Develop and open a new Edge of Care Children's Home
- Develop a 'Relief Pool' to provide additional staffing capacity, across residential homes and our edge of care service
- Develop a Staying Close Pilot
- Expand our smaller homes offer (1-2 bedded homes) with potentially up to 4 additional homes, depending on the ongoing service needs
- Develop up to three new therapeutic children's homes for children aged 7-13 and 12-17
- Review the upper bedding capacity of our existing children's homes to meet our changing needs

# Key Priorities

- Continue to work closely with providers, to shape new services, to insist on a 'Durham First Approach' and to positively challenge service development when this does not meet our local sufficiency needs
- We will continue to review our out of county placements to understand which children and young people have a plan to move back into Durham

## **Objective 4 - Develop access to a diverse range of appropriate accommodation for Care Leavers**

- We will review the current supported living offer on an ongoing basis and ensure that new services are secured when gaps in provision are identified
- We will seek agreement to extend the current offer provided by our commissioned supported accommodation service, with dispersed accommodation provision