

## **Cabinet**

**18 January 2023**

**Acquisition of property for use as  
Children's Homes**

**Ordinary Decision**



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### **Report of Corporate Management Team**

**John Pearce, Corporate Director of Children and Young People's  
Service**

**Amy Harhoff, Corporate Director of Regeneration and Economic  
Growth**

**Councillor James Rowlandson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for  
Resources, Investment and Assets**

**Councillor Ted Henderson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children  
and Young People's Services**

### **Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

### **Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To expedite the acquisition process and enable fair competition with other buyers when purchasing properties for use as children's homes.
- 2 To increase the delegated authority to Officers for acquisition of property for use as children's homes.

### **Executive summary**

- 3 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 children looked after within their local authority area. This is often referred to as the Council's "sufficiency duty".

- 4 There has been a 148 percent increase in the use of external residential provision since June 2019, and a 103 percent increase since March 2020 (start of Covid).
- 5 As of February 2022, 40 percent of all children in residential care provision were living outside of County Durham (37 out of 92), so the Council is placing children and young people at a distance, due to the lack of local placements, which is often not in their best interests.
- 6 Children and young people are presenting with increasing needs, many of which require small children's home settings. It is important that the Council has a broader range of local provision to meet children and young people's individual needs and to prevent children from being placed at a distance from home.
- 7 The Council has adopted a Sufficiency Strategy for Children Looked After and Care Leavers to help discharge its sufficiency duty. A key objective of that Strategy is to "continue to develop and broaden our residential homes offer" to meet our increasing demand for services through the development of a suite of new smaller children's homes which will be operated by the Local Authority and will meet the needs of our most vulnerable young people.
- 8 Due to an increasing number of children looked after and their increasing needs, the Council is facing challenges in meeting its sufficiency duty as we currently have insufficient resources to meet this objective and the number of placements we currently have are outstripped by the demand for placements.
- 9 The increasing demand and pressure placed on councils to meet their sufficiency duty is a position that is replicated across the UK and has recently been highlighted in the Independent Review of Children's Social Care by Josh MacAlister (May 2022).
- 10 The Council has attempted to purchase several properties and has often been unsuccessful due to:
  - the approval process requires us to place offers subject to Planning Permission for change of use, which can take time and vendors usually accept offers from buyers who can proceed quickly;
  - external market forces, coupled with the need to be prudent with the public purse, means the Council misses out on securing potentially suitable properties for use as children's homes as it is often outbid;

- the Head of Corporate Property and Land currently has delegated authority to approve the principle of acquiring property at a price not exceeding £250,000. Four-to-five-bedroom properties often cost more than this, approval to require such properties requires Cabinet approval, which can delay the Council's ability to make offers on properties.
- 11 Where we have been unable to find the capacity we need locally, we have a resolution of last resort to find provision outside of the County. To address this issue, we need to increase the in-house provision that the Council can provide, so we have placements we can be proud of.
- 12 The approach to acquiring property for use as children's homes has been reviewed. This report sets out the outcome of that review and recommends changes to the approach which are intended to reduce the timescales for acquiring property, refurbishment, and registration as a children's home and in turn increasing the Council's in-house provision.

### **Recommendation(s)**

- 13 Cabinet is recommended to:
- (a) note the contents of this report;
  - (b) approve the revised approach to acquiring property for the purposes of purchasing children's homes as attached at Appendix 3;
  - (c) delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Economic Growth, in consultation with the Corporate Director of Resources as Section 151 Officer, the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Resources, Investments and Assets and the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance to approve the acquisition of property up to the value of £500,000 where the property is to be used as a children's home only;
  - (d) agree that as a rarity, the acquisition of new children's homes is deemed a priority so that teams involved in the process can expedite them.

## Background

- 14 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 children looked after within their local authority area.
- 15 The 2010 guidance on the 'sufficiency duty' states that local authorities should have embedded plans, as part of their commissioning processes and through partnership working, to meet the duty.
- 16 The pandemic has presented the Council with many challenges over recent months, which we continue to work through day-to-day and is captured in the data below:
  - a 103 percent increase in the use of external residential provision since March 2020, and a 148 percent increase since June 2019;
  - more children being placed away from home in out-of-county residential provision. As of February 2022, 40 percent of all children in residential care provision were living outside of County Durham (37 out of 92);
  - in the year April 2022 to March 2023, to date we have a total of 105 children in residential care provision, with 51 placed outside of the county. Of the remaining 54 residing within the county, 31 are in Council in-house provision and 23 in independent registered residential provision.
- 17 Our Sufficiency Strategy for Children Looked After and Care Leavers sets out our overarching priority, which continues to be:

'To constantly review our sufficiency gaps, secure appropriate accommodation and care for children and the development of new solutions to meet our changing needs.'
- 18 A key objective within the Sufficiency Strategy is to 'continue to develop and broaden our residential homes offer' to meet our increasing demand for services through the development of a suite of new smaller children's homes which will be operated by the Local Authority and will be appropriate for our young people with most complex needs.
- 19 Historically, we have done this, but it has become increasingly challenging due to it being specialist in nature and the lack of placements available, particularly older children/teenagers, children with very complex needs or children/young people who are at risk due to exploitation.

- 20 The growing number of children looked after and those with increasing needs, means the Council is facing challenges in meeting its sufficiency duty as we currently have insufficient resources to meet this objective and the number of placements we currently have are outstripped by the demand for placements.
- 21 The increasing demand and pressure placed on councils to meet their sufficiency duty is a position that is replicated across the UK and has recently been highlighted in the Independent Review of Children's Social Care by Josh MacAlister (May 2022).
- 22 The number of newly registered children's homes in England has risen by 3 per cent between April and August 2021, but this doesn't directly correlate with local authority sufficiency improving partly due to children in care numbers rising. It is becoming increasingly more challenging to place young people who need residential care in appropriate local provision at a reasonable cost<sup>1</sup>. This is the driver for Durham County Council expanding its in-house residential provision over the next two to three years whilst also focusing on quality and outcomes of its existing provision.
- 23 The number of foster placements available in England hasn't risen in line with the number of children in care; the number of approved foster carers rose 9 per cent between 2015 and 2021, whereas the number of children in care rose 11 per cent during the same period. Of the approved foster carers in England 65 per cent are over 50 years old and 25 per cent are over 60 years old giving further cause for concern over the future capacity in foster care in England<sup>2</sup>.
- 24 When looking for a suitable property to use as a children's home there are many factors to consider. The location of the property is key ensuring that it is a safe area where young people can thrive. The property itself needs to have enough space for young people with a good layout; parking is important, as is proximity to neighbouring houses.
- 25 The challenges in finding such properties have been exacerbated since the rise in house prices, lack of availability of suitable properties, and the buoyancy of the local housing market.
- 26 Vendors are sometimes reluctant to sell their house to be used as a children's home due to concerns from neighbours. Concerns are often

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Ofsted Fostering in England 2020 to 2021 Main Findings report (published Nov 2021)  
[Fostering in England 2020 to 2021: main findings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1014422/Fostering_in_England_2020_to_2021_main_findings.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Source: Ofsted Fostering in England 2020 to 2021 Main Findings report (published Nov 2021)  
[Fostering in England 2020 to 2021: main findings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1014422/Fostering_in_England_2020_to_2021_main_findings.pdf)

raised when the Council makes Members and the local community aware of plans to set up a children’s home; these are understandable, and we work to reassure them by explaining how our children’s homes are run as well as our regulatory commitments.

27 The Council is currently developing nine new homes:

- (a) we are seeking either two-to-three-bedroom homes for one-to-two children, or four-to-five-bedroom homes for three-to-four children;
- (b) four are ongoing with properties identified and being progressed;
- (c) five are to be developed;
- (d) costs for properties acquired for use a Children’s Residential Homes outlined in (a) above to date:

<b>Home</b>	<b>Purchase Price</b>	<b>Refurbishment Cost (including security measures)</b>
H	£335,000	£61,825
O	£275,000	£132,750
E	£250,000	Costs being finalised
<b>Total</b>	<b>£860,000</b>	<b>£194,575</b>

28 In the year 1 April 2022 until 31 March 2023, the Council will spend £15,217,344 on 51 registered placements outside of the county, where we do not have sufficient in-house or local provision available. This equates to an average of £298,379 per placement per year.

29 In the same period, the Council has 31 in-house local placements at a cost of £7,883,998 for a year, equating to £254,323 for each placement and a further 23 local independent residential placements making a total of 54. Acquiring more properties to use as children’s homes will result in savings of £44,056 per placement per year, as well as better meeting the needs of our children and young people in care.

### *Context*

30 In addition to the information above, the recommendations in this report should be set against the following:

- (a) the children and young people that the Council is ultimately trying to improve availability of placements for, have been removed from their family due to neglect, physical and sexual abuse, domestic violence, or substance misuse, and have often been subject to significant trauma already;
- (b) we are 'corporate parents' and have a duty of care for children and young people, ensuring they are safe, nurtured and live in good quality living arrangements;
- (c) the Council has ongoing significant sufficiency pressures and needs to be able to develop new services in a 'timely and effective' way that respond to our ongoing needs and jointly owned across the Council;
- (d) we need to ensure that all our children live in regulated placements when they have care needs and that we have more local provision to prevent children and young people from being placed at a distance, which is often not in their best interests;
- (e) the need for additional residential placements for County Durham children has repercussions across the system. There are children in our acute hospital beds who remain beyond their need for inpatient medical intervention because there are no social care residential placements available to meet their needs. A quicker process to purchase additional capacity would support the integrated commissioning team in ensuring the right services are available for our children and young people;
- (f) market commentary. Source: Jackson-Stops Estate Agents based on data from Rightmove (March 2022):
  - (i) Durham has the lowest number of homes for sale with one home for sale for every 1,693 residents and the next lowest being West Midlands with one home available per 445 residents. The average in England is 255 people to every residence. (Based on 46 counties, excluding London);
  - (ii) this lack of available properties is leading to higher house prices as demand continues to remain strong;
  - (iii) in the six months to September 2022, the average UK house price has increased to a record high of £282,753 despite inflationary pressures on households, including from energy, fuel, food, and recent interest rate rises. Whether the market will remain as competitive as the cost-of-living and mortgage interest rate increases are felt by households is not yet clear;

- (g) as custodians of the public purse, the council should not purchase a property over Market Value (MV). In the Council's case MV is defined by our own in-house RICS Registered Valuers who use comparable sales evidence and data to determine the value of the property to be purchased. The Council must also comply with Subsidy Control rules where appropriate.

### *Corporate Parent*

- 31 Local authorities must provide the care, support, and security that young people need if they can't stay at home safely and become the young people's 'corporate parent'.
- 32 Everyone should be looking out for our children and young people, and every councillor and Council employee has a role to play as the eyes and ears of the community.
- 33 Being a corporate parent means doing whatever we can to support young people in our care and our care leavers, to help them achieve their full potential and have the best possible outcomes.

### *Process Review*

- 34 In February 2022, the Transformation Team was commissioned to conduct an end-to-end process review from identification of need for a property to the home being operational and fully staffed in consultation with all teams involved. Its aim was to understand the actions necessary to reduce the overall timescale of the process to secure suitable, local provision of placements to help fulfil our sufficiency duty and improve outcomes for children and young people in our care.
- 35 The overarching outcome for the process review was expressed in the Goal Statement, which was to have:
  - 'A seamless efficient and effective process which enables all our children looked after to have the opportunity of a good quality home within County Durham.'
- 36 If the key objectives are achieved, the high-level benefits will be:
  - (a) reduced time in the overall process;
  - (b) increased collaboration;
  - (c) increased transparency of process and expectations;
  - (d) improved outcomes for the children and young person;
  - (e) our Statutory requirements are met.



- 37 This process review looked only at the provision of children's residential homes, and their flow through the existing processes considering what was required to reduce the timescale. We were not seeking to change existing processes, as due to the small number of properties we are seeking, this is a rarity.
- 38 The review was conducted between March and August 2022 and identified several areas to address to reduce the overall timescale and remove obstacles from the process for provision of children's residential homes.

## Findings

- 39 At the time of the review there was a sellers' market with homes selling fast, often above asking price or above where the Council's RICS Registered Valuers suggest the property values are; therefore, we are often outbid, due to our obligations to be prudent with the public purse.
- 40 It should be noted that there are predictions for a five to fifteen percent drop in house prices over the next six months, as the market is changing and interest rates are increasing, so the sellers' market that we were experiencing may begin to slow.
- 41 Under Table 3 of the Officer Scheme of Delegation (within Part 3 of the Constitution) the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Economic Growth currently has delegated authority to approve the principle of acquiring property at a price not exceeding £250,000. However, the cost of four-to-five-bedroom properties often exceeds this, with recent purchases costing £275,000, £335,000, and more recently £450,000.
- 42 Planning permission is required to use a property as a children's home. Therefore, currently offers to acquire properties for this purpose are made subject to planning permission being granted.
- 43 Vendors are not keen to sell 'subject to planning' (for change of use) as they want their sale to happen quickly and with many potential buyers for their property, they have no reason to accept our conditional offer.
- 44 As vendors are usually living in the property they are selling, they are unable to accommodate too many visits for inspections, which delays full condition surveys and commencement of our design process. The Council's process is different from that of a normal house purchase, with this being one of the ways.
- 45 It is not uncommon for local communities to oppose proposals to open Children's Homes in their areas due to concerns regarding the misconception that Children's Homes attract crime and disorder. This can also impact on vendors' willingness to sell their properties to the

Council. To help alleviate these concerns, it is important that Officers work closely with all Elected Members, particularly those representing areas where a children's home is to be located to ensure that Members understand the Council's role as a Corporate Parent, the sufficiency duty and how the homes operate, to help overcome local concerns and opposition.

- 46 Where offers are rejected or following an accepted offer, the sale which is subject to contract does not proceed for any reason, the search for property must start again, and the time and resources expended by all involved in the process, to that point, is wasted.
- 47 Due to the amount of workflow through the existing processes, the progress of these properties can be affected by waiting time, which can contribute to longer timescales until a children's home is ready for occupation.

### **Proposed Approach**

- 48 In response to the findings of the review, the following approach is proposed:

#### *Delegation*

- 49 It is recommended that the existing delegated authority to Officers to authorise the acquisition of property is increased from £250,000 to £500,000 where the purpose of the acquisition is to provide a Children's Home.
- 50 As set out above, the intention is to acquire five properties by the end of 2023, which means that Officer delegated powers for this purpose will be used infrequently. It is recommended that the delegation is to the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy, and Growth in consultation with the Corporate Director of Resources in their capacity as section 151 Officer. It will also be a requirement that the relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holders are consulted on the proposed acquisition.

#### *Planning Permission*

- 51 It is recommended that offers to acquire property for the purpose of a Children's Home are not subject to planning permission. This will ensure that the Council is better placed to secure properties in a challenging housing market. Planning Permission will still be sought but not a condition when making the offer.
- 52 As with all property purchases, offers are subject to contract so due diligence will still be applied throughout the process and the Council can withdraw from a sale if it does not meet the necessary standards and

requirements or other concerns arise as part of the due diligence process.

- 53 Removing the requirement for an offer to be subject to planning permission will:
- (a) increase our opportunity for offers to be accepted by levelling the playing field with other buyers and shorten the property search time;
  - (b) allow parts of the process to run concurrently rather than linear, resulting in a contribution to reducing the timescale of the whole process by five months;
  - (c) enable more of the process to run concurrently and condition surveys and the design process to start much earlier, reducing the overall timescale from viewing to occupancy by four-to-five months;
  - (d) enable Member engagement at an earlier point in the process;
  - (e) enable a pre-planning application to be submitted earlier in the process;
  - (f) enable early engagement work to be carried out with communities in the locality of the property;
  - (g) as few properties are required (five more by end of 2023), there are very few opportunities for risk as this is a rarity;
  - (h) allow young people to move into an Ofsted registered home more quickly, enabling children looked after to have the opportunity of a good quality home within County Durham;
  - (i) a summary of the existing process and the proposed bespoke process for acquiring properties for use as children's homes are attached at Appendix 2 and 3.
- 54 If the contracts are exchanged and planning permission for change of use is not granted, the Council may need to sell the property, if we do not have another use for it, and may or may not achieve the purchase price. It is unlikely we would be able to sell it for more than we paid for it within the short period of council ownership i.e., six-to-twelve months.
- 55 This risk can be mitigated by the following:
- (a) we use the pre-planning application to seek guidance from planners about the suitability of the proposal in line with planning policy guidance and they link in with highways and police at that

stage and consider the proposal from a risk and parking perspective;

- (b) in some cases, exchange of contract would occur prior to planning permission being granted, though we would not proceed to exchange contracts unless we were reasonably confident that it would be granted following pre-planning advice and engagement with local Elected Members and communities;
- (c) as the offer will be subject to contract, we can pull out of a sale at our discretion, if necessary, prior to contract exchange;
- (d) getting Members and communities engaged earlier gives more time to offer assurances and promote the importance of providing stable living environment for young people who need it, reducing the risk of contested planning applications;
- (e) checking in with the police regarding locality risks and suitability of the area, means we can pull out early, prior to most of the work commencing, if the locality is unsuitable;
- (f) as few properties are required (up to five more by end of 2023), there are very few opportunities for risk as this is a rarity;
- (g) not having good quality, registered local placements carries a greater risk than proceeding prior to planning permission being granted.

### *Prioritisation*

- 56 It is recommended that as a rarity (less than five properties to be purchased by the end of 2023), the acquisition of new children's homes is deemed a priority so that teams involved in the process can expedite them.
- 57 Prioritising new children's homes above other projects may displace other work initially, with the impact being greater at the onset, for a short period of time. The children's home is then programmed into future work, so no longer impacts other projects.
- 58 Where other projects are displaced and the extended timescales could impact significantly on the other project, communication will be required to manage expectations, or where there is a likelihood of more serious consequences, an assessment of risk to both projects should be carried out to prioritise the order of work between them.

## *Market Value*

- 59 Very rarely, offers may be required at higher than the market value assessment to secure properties in the current market, where few suitable properties are available. Each case would be considered on its own merits. The Service and Finance would need to evidence that it could be justified due to the cost savings year-on-year. Business Cases would be submitted for these offers to Head of Corporate Property and Land and if agreed, signed off by the Section 151 Officer.

## *Corporate Parent*

- 60 Raise the profile with Elected Members and throughout the Council of what it means to be a Corporate Parent. This would involve delivering a session on our responsibilities as a Corporate Parent, how it fits with our sufficiency duty and what we can all do to be good Corporate Parents.

## *Audit*

- 61 Whilst there is a risk that, having purchased a property, planning permission for use as a Children's Home is refused, it is considered that the level of the risk given the small number of properties is low and that appropriate mitigations can be put in place to manage the risk. There is a greater risk to the Council if it is unable to secure further in-house provision and discharge its sufficiency duty. Not only will this have a negative reputational impact on the Council, more importantly it will have a negative impact on the lives of children and young people in our care who are unable to have a placement in a good quality registered home within the county.

## **Conclusion**

- 62 We are currently facing challenges to meet our statutory duty to provide enough good quality provision of registered Children's Homes that meet the needs of children and young people with the most complex needs within County Durham.
- 63 The proposed solution offers a proportionate response to the current issues in securing properties for use as Children's Homes and by reducing the timescale by four-to-five months, it will enable all our children looked after to have the opportunity of a good quality home within County Durham.
- 64 The recommendations proposed in this report, while not risk free, will significantly contribute to us meeting our statutory duty. The option to do nothing carries greater risk.

65 If agreed, the proposed solutions will be developed and implemented in consultation and collaboration with the nominated people involved in the process, to enable us to achieve our goal of having a seamless, efficient, and effective process for all our children looked after to have the opportunity of a good quality home within County Durham.

### **Background papers**

- Independent Review of Children’s Social Care by Josh MacAlister (May 2022). [The-independent-review-of-childrens-social-care-Final-report.pdf \(childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk\)](https://childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk)
- Ofsted Local authority and children’s homes in England inspections and outcomes – Autumn 2021 [Main findings: Local authority and children’s homes in England inspections and outcomes - autumn 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- Source: Ofsted Fostering in England 2020 to 2021 Main Findings report (published Nov 2021) [Fostering in England 2020 to 2021: main findings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

### **Other useful documents**

- None

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

Section 22A of the Children Act 1989 places a duty on the local authority to provide children in their care with accommodation. Section 22G requires local authorities to ensure they secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within their area which meets the needs of children that the local authority is looking after and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare to be provided with accommodation that is in their local area (Sufficiency Duty).

The acquisition of property is an executive function. Cabinet therefore can delegate authority to Officers to acquire property on terms that it considers appropriate. Delegating authority to Officers does not prevent Cabinet exercising the authority if it is considered appropriate. It is a requirement that relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holders are consulted by Officers prior to exercising delegated authority. If Cabinet agrees to amend the Officer scheme of delegation, the Constitution will be amended as part of the annual review. Until such time as the Constitution is amended, this report and minute from the relevant Cabinet meeting will be the authority for exercising the delegated powers.

### **Finance**

We are currently developing nine new homes with four properties identified and being progressed and five more to be developed.

Costs for properties acquired for use as Children's Residential Homes outlined above to date are: £335,000 with £61,825 refurbishment costs; £275,000 with £132,750 refurbishment costs; and £250,000 with refurbishment costs being finalised. The total spent on the acquisition of properties so far is £860,000 for the purchase costs and £194,575 with some to be finalised for refurbishment.

In the year 1 April 2022 until 31 March 2023, the Council will spend £15,217,344 on 51 registered placements outside of the county, where we do not have sufficient in-house or local provision available. This equates to an average of £298,379 per placement per year. During the same period, the Council has 31 council-owned local placements at a cost of £7,883,998 for a year, equating to £254,323 for each placement. Acquiring more properties to use as children's homes will result in savings of £44,056 per placement per year, as well as better meeting the needs of our children and young people in care.

## **Consultation**

As part of the Pre-Planning process, consultation is carried out with the Chair of Parenting Panel, the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services and at the same time, the Police to obtain a Locality Risk Assessment.

This is followed by consultation and engagement with Elected Members of the locality of the proposed Children's Homes, neighbours, and the nearby local community to explain what we are proposing, why and to and questions and allay any concerns they may have.

## **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

The Authority is required to ensure that all looked after children have equality of opportunity, to ensure best outcomes.

## **Climate Change**

No implications.

## **Human Rights**

Young People who are in the care of Durham County Council have the right to be provided with suitable and appropriate local care which can meet their needs to enable them to successfully move into adulthood. This could also lead to care experienced Adults taking legal action against the Local Authority for failings to either keep them safe legally or provide suitable provisions for their care as outlined in the Care Act.

## **Crime and Disorder**

There is a misconception that Children's Homes attract crime and disorder.

The Police carry out research into the area of any proposed Children's Home and provide a Locality Risk Assessment to help to minimise any risks of harm to the children and young people who will live in the property.

## **Staffing**

This report proposes that the Council prioritise these properties when required and this work will be carried out by existing staff. There will be implications on workloads, particularly around managing displaced work, though as there are very few properties required this will not occur very often.

Each new Children's Home will require staffing and recruitment will be necessary as there is no capacity currently available within the Service.



**Accommodation**

We are developing nine new homes in total: four are ongoing with properties identified and being progressed, and five are to be developed.

**Risk**

The risks and mitigations are identified within the report.

**Procurement**

No implications.

## Appendix 2: Current process for acquisition and development of Children's Homes

The current process is linear and takes approximately fourteen months from start to completion.

Step	Process	Check point	Yes	No
1	Property search and viewing	Does property look suitable?	Move to next step	Restart process
2	Valuation, offer and agreement to proceed with offer	Is offer accepted?	Move to next step	Negotiate, if possible  Restart process
3	Commence Legal Process  Condition Inspection, investigations, and costings  Police Risk Assessment on area	Any major concerns?	Withdraw offer and restart process	Proceed with purchase  Move to next step
4	Pre-planning process  Briefing note to Chair of Parenting Panel and Portfolio Holder  Engage with local members, respond to queries	Any major concerns highlighted in pre-planning advice?	Withdraw offer and restart process	Proceed with purchase  Move to next step
5	Planning Process  Engage with members and local communities	Is planning permission granted?	Proceed with purchase  Move to next step	Hold planning committee if necessary  Appeal, if appropriate

<b>Step</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Check point</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
				Withdraw offer and restart process
6	Exchange contracts	Are we content to sign?	Move to next step	Deal with any outstanding issues  If outcome not satisfactory, withdraw from sale
7	Design Process	Is everything as expected with property?	Move to next step	Address concerns
8	Mobilisation	Is everything as expected with property?	Move to next step	Address concerns
9	Construction, adaptations, snagging	Is everything ready to start work?	Move to next step	Address concerns
10	Furniture ordered and fit-out	Is construction/work to required specification and standard?	Move to next step	Address concerns
11	Make house homely	Is home ready for Ofsted visit?	Move to next step	Address concerns
12	Ofsted visit and registration	Is it up to Ofsted standard?	Home registered  Move to next step	Address concerns and arrange reinspection
13	Receive children	Complete	Complete	N/A

### Appendix 3: Proposed Bespoke Process for acquisition and development of Children's Homes

The proposed bespoke process enables parts of the process to run concurrently and takes approximately nine-to-ten months from start to completion.

Step	Process	Check point	Yes	No
1	Property search and viewing	Does property look suitable?	Move to next step	Restart process
2	Valuation, offer and agreement to proceed with offer	Is offer accepted?	Move to next step	Negotiate, if possible  Restart process
3	Commence Legal Process  Condition Inspection, investigations, and costings  Pre-planning process  Briefing note to Chair of Parenting Panel and Portfolio Holder  Engage with local members, respond to queries  Police Risk Assessment on area	Any major concerns?	Withdraw offer and restart process	Proceed with purchase  Move to next step
4	Planning Process  Engage with members and local communities	Is planning permission granted?  (This could occur after step 6, though design work would not	Proceed with purchase  Move to next step	Hold planning committee if necessary  Appeal, if appropriate  Withdraw offer and

Step	Process	Check point	Yes	No
		commence unless planning permission is granted)		restart process (if contracts not exchanged)  If contracts exchanged - alternative use or resell the property
5	Exchange contracts	Are we content to sign?	Move to next step	Deal with any outstanding issues  If outcome not satisfactory, withdraw from sale
6	Design Process	Is everything as expected with property?	Move to next step	Address concerns
7	Mobilisation	Ready to start work?	Move to next step	Address concerns
8	Construction, adaptations, snagging  Furniture ordered and fit-out	Is construction/ work to required specification and standard?	Move to next step	Address concerns
19	Make house homely	Is home ready for Ofsted visit?	Move to next step	Address concerns
10	Ofsted visit and registration	Is it up to Ofsted standard?	Home registered  Move to next step	Address concerns and arrange reinspection
11	Receive children	Complete	Complete	N/A