

Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Children Looked After and Care Leavers 2022-24

Presentation to Corporate Parenting Panel



Introduction and Context

- Durham’s strategic approach to securing sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of our children looked after and care leavers.
- Sufficiency 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”.
- Covers a 2-year period (2022-2024) focusing on our current offer, challenges, gaps in services / provision and the actions identified to address these.
- Ongoing actions and projects underway and future actions we are proposing to take as a Local Authority – some of which are subject to funding availability.
- The Strategy has been approved at CMT and Cabinet.
- Final stage – to seek approval from Corporate Parenting Panel Members today

Achievements over the previous 2 years....

- Developed a new Rapid Response Service preventing admission and readmission to tier 4 mental health inpatient provision
- Improved placement brokerage capacity to support residential home searches
- Continuing to roll out a 'Durham First Approach' with providers in Durham and influencing service development
- New Supporting the Provider Market Team – recruitment, training etc
- Opened 2 x new children's homes in 2021; 1 x new children's home for 2 children in 2022; with 2 x smaller homes due to open in the coming months
- Launched new Local Provider Forums to improve communication and collaboration with the provider market
- Secured DfE Staying Close Funding and launched a new Staying Close Pilot Programme for our children's homes

What does the strategy tell us?

- Number of children in care is increasing in Durham
- 70.3% of our CYP live in County Durham. Most of our CYP that live outside of County Durham live within the region
- Increasing number of teenagers in care with multiple accommodation moves
- Delayed discharges from tier 4 hospital, due to limited specialist local regulated provision
- Use of external residential provision has increased by 50% between 2020 and 2022
- Need to increase the number of available foster carers to meet ongoing demand
- Increasing number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) moving to Durham through the mandated Home Office Scheme, placing pressure on available resources
- Placement stability – increasing number of breakdowns and moves
- Increasing number of children and families being supported on the edge of care with opportunities to broaden the service further
- Gaps in respite services for C/YP with learning disabilities and complex needs, particularly overnight

Key Development Priorities

The local authority has identified **six overarching objectives** within the strategy, which will address current gaps in provision and will seek to broaden and make improvements to our sufficiency offer in Durham. These are:

1. Grow our number of in-house foster carers, support the retention of carers and work with Independent Fostering Agencies to ensure that children and young people can live with foster carer families when it is in their interests to do so.
2. Increase the number of adopters
3. Continue to develop and broaden our children's homes offer and maximise opportunities with external providers when there is a case to do so.
4. Develop access to a diverse range of appropriate accommodation for Care Leavers.
5. Improve our sufficiency offer for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) / Young People and reduce waiting times.
6. Broaden our short breaks offer for disabled children and their families.

Key Development Priorities

- Under each objective is a series of key priorities, which relate to the development of new services and improvements to support our range of needs for children and young people. All **39 priorities** are outlined in Appendix 1 of the Strategy.
- Key areas of development include (but are not limited to):
 - Review the payment for skills (foster care payment model) to improve sufficiency by attracting new carers and retaining existing carers
 - Develop a wrap-around support team in fostering to promote stability and prevent breakdown
 - Development of new smaller children's homes to meet the needs of our most complex young people and reduce out of county provision
 - Development of a new Edge of Care Home
 - Develop new accommodation and support options for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people
 - Develop overnight short breaks provision to meet the needs of our most complex children and young people