

Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee

7 January 2025



Sufficiency Strategy for Children in Care and Care Leavers 2022-2024 Update

Report of John Pearce, Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services, and Sarah Burns, Director of Local Delivery – County Durham / Joint Head of Integrated Strategic Commissioning for NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board and Durham County Council

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 This report provides an update about the achievements and progress made against the current Sufficiency Strategy for Children in Care and Care Leavers, which was published in May 2022.
- 2 The report sets out the current position and work taking place to review and realign key priorities and workstreams, which will inform the refresh of the strategy in 2025.

Executive summary

- 3 The Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy sets out Durham's strategic approach to securing sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of our children in care.
- 4 The Strategy was reviewed and published in May 2022 and outlines the sufficiency position at a point in time, providing local intelligence and data, identifying a series of key priorities and actions to improve the council's overall sufficiency of placement provision for children and young people who can no longer live with their family. Please refer to Appendix 2 of this report for a copy of the strategy.
- 5 The increasing demand and pressure placed on councils to meet their sufficiency duty is a position that is replicated across the UK and is placing significant pressure on council budgets.

- 6 The changing landscape of children’s social care has been highlighted in a series of national reviews looking at the needs, experiences and outcomes of children supported by social care and the expansion of the for-profit sector to meet children’s accommodation needs. This includes:
 - (a) Independent review of children’s social care by Josh MacAlister (May 2022) which proposes to ‘reset children’s social care’.
 - (b) The Competitions and Markets Authority – Children’s Social Care Market Study.
 - (c) Evidencing the outsourcing of social care provision in England (Nuffield Foundation).
- 7 The Department of Education’s new policy paper on children’s social care, ‘Keeping children safe, helping families thrive’, was published in November 2024 and sets out four key principles for reform. They are:
 - (a) Wherever possible children should remain with their families and be safely prevented from entering care in the first place.
 - (b) Support children to live with kinship or foster carers rather than residential care.
 - (c) Fix the broken care market – by improving competition, regulation and commissioning, as well as shining a light on the levels of profit being made.
 - (d) A focus on key enablers including better data and information sharing, spreading evidence-based programmes and the workforce.
- 8 The policy paper will feed into the new Children’s Wellbeing Bill due to be published and will help to influence and shape our new Sufficiency Strategy.
- 9 Whilst national reform is being initiated and a new Regional Commissioning Group has been established to produce a regional sufficiency statement, which will result in improved collective management of the independent market, the council continues to experience a number of challenges, which places pressure on services, including:
 - (a) An increase in the number of children and young people that we look after. Between March 2015 and March 2022, this increased by 62%, with numbers continuing to increase to 1,034 as of the October 2022 and as predicted in the strategy. Our children in

care number have continued to increase, with 1,192 children and young people currently in the care of the local authority.

- (b) An increasing number of older teenagers coming into care, who are often difficult to find suitable provision for due to their needs.
 - (c) Children and young people have increasing complex needs, with often more specialist provision required.
 - (d) A small number of delayed discharges from tier four hospital, due to limited specialist local regulated provision.
 - (e) Use of external residential provision increased by 50% between 2020 and 2022 and has continued to increase.
 - (f) The need to increase the number of available foster carers to meet our increasing demand.
 - (g) Increasing number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children moving to County Durham.
 - (h) Placement stability – increasing number of breakdowns and moves.
 - (i) An increasing number of children, young people and families requiring support who are on the edge of care.
 - (j) More families require respite services for their children who have a disability, with increasing gaps in service provision, particularly overnight provision for children with complex needs.
- 10 The current strategy identifies a series of objectives and short to medium term key priorities, many of which are ongoing and being developed, to improve and broaden our current sufficiency offer.
- 11 There are six overarching objectives within the strategy, including:
- (a) Grow our number of in-house foster carers, support the retention of carers and work with IFAs to ensure that children and young people can live with foster carer families when it is in their interests to do so.
 - (b) Increase the number of adopters.
 - (c) Continue to develop and broaden our residential homes offer and maximise opportunities with external providers when this is a case to do so.

- (d) Develop access to a diverse range of appropriate accommodation for Care Leavers.
 - (e) Improve our sufficiency offer for UASC and reduce waiting times.
 - (f) Broaden our short breaks offer for disabled children and their families.
- 12 Each objective proposes a series of key priorities / actions to support their delivery. A total of 39 priorities are identified. The report provides a summary of the progress made to date. All key priorities are identified in appendix 3 of this report.
- 13 As our children in care numbers have continued to increase, so too has our expenditure for children in the care, with £30m spent on children in care placements in 2020, increasing by 143% to a forecast year end of £74m in 2024. This places significant pressure on already stretched council budgets.
- 14 To help us review our forecast expenditure over the next 5 years and to quantify the impact of existing initiatives being developed, we appointed an organisation called Newton Europe to carry out some initial diagnostic work. Their high-level findings are outlined later in this report.
- 15 A series of new mitigating work programmes to reduce likely future expenditure increase are being planned and our current programmes are being reconfigured to scope and agree these areas of work.

Recommendation(s)

- 16 The Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:
- (a) consider and note the contents of this report; *and*
 - (b) acknowledge the changing landscape in children's social care and the ongoing work taking place following the review by Newton Europe which will influence our future work programmes and shape our new Sufficiency Strategy.

Background

- 17 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 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.
- 18 The sufficiency duty must take account of the requirement, under section 22C (5) of the Children Act 1989, that the overriding consideration for placing a child is that the placement must be the most appropriate available to meet the child's needs. Next, preference must be given to a placement with a friend, relative or other person connected with the child and who is a local authority foster carer. Failing that, a placement must be found, as far as is reasonably practicable in all circumstances, that:
- (a) is near the child's home;
 - (b) is within the local authority's area unless that is not reasonably practicable;
 - (c) enables the child to live with an accommodated sibling;
 - (d) where the child is disabled, is suitable to meet the needs of that child; *and*
 - (e) does not disrupt his/her education or training.
- 19 The Strategy outlined that there was increasing demand and pressure placed on councils to meet their sufficiency duty. This pressure has continued to intensify over recent years and is a position that is replicated across the UK and was highlighted in the Independent Review of Children's Social Care by Josh MacAlister in May 2022 and a series of other national reviews focusing on the changing landscape of children's social care.
- 20 The review highlights the significant impact on local authority budgets due to the rising costs associated with caring for children in care, with the Market Competitions Authority highlighting the levels of profit being made by private companies through the fees that they charge to local authorities to care for children and young people. A range of national improvement measures and updated legislation is proposed in the forthcoming Children's Wellbeing Bill.

Priorities

- 21 The Strategy focused on six broad objectives. These were:
- (a) Grow our number of in-house foster carers, support the retention of carers and work with IFAs to ensure that children and young people can live with foster carer families when it is in their interests to do so.
 - (b) Increase the number of adopters.
 - (c) Continue to develop and broaden our residential homes offer and maximise opportunities with external providers when there is a case to do so.
 - (d) Develop access to a diverse range of appropriate accommodation for care leavers.
 - (e) Improve our sufficiency offer for UASC and reduce waiting times.
 - (f) Broaden our short breaks offer for disabled children and their families.
- 22 Each objective proposed a series of key priorities (39 in total) to support their delivery. Progress against the priorities is captured in the section below.

Sufficiency Strategy Progress

Governance

- 23 During the lifetime of this strategy (2022-2024), the governance of the sufficiency programme has been strengthened.
- 24 The Durham Care Board (formerly known as the Corporate Sufficiency Board) was established and is chaired by the Director of Children and Young People's Service, with membership from across the council and partners. The board provides oversight and scrutiny to the range of work programmes being delivered.
- 25 A number of thematic workstreams have been developed to drive forward a range of work programmes; these include Prevention and Early Help, Fostering, Residential, Workforce Development and Demand Modelling. All workstreams report into the Board on a monthly basis. These workstreams are being reviewed and reconfigured in line with the findings of the Newton Europe report.
- 26 The improved governance of the programme and multi-partner approach has helped us to address barriers to timely progress.

Thematic Updates

Fostering

- 27 We have recruited nine new foster carer households in 2022/23 and 25 in 2023/24. The recruitment and retention of foster carers continues to be a huge focus for us. The Foster with Northeast pilot has resulted in a 12% increase in enquiries to foster with Durham.
- 28 Durham are now part of Fostering Northeast, working collaboratively across the region to recruit foster carers.
- 29 We have developed the Mockingbird Model in the Fostering Service, providing an innovative model of support to Durham foster carers, resulting in stability for children and young people and the retention of foster carers through an improved support offer. In 2024 we developed our third mockingbird constellation, with the fourth constellation being recruited to.
- 30 We reviewed our Payment for Skills model, which identifies how much we will pay our foster carers. It is important that we continue to benchmark our payments and offer against other local authorities and providers.
- 31 In 2023 we recommissioned our regional Fostering Framework and continue to encourage new providers to join this solution.

Adoption

- 32 We received 179 enquiries for Durham in 2022-23 and 115 in 2023-24. This is a reduction of 36%. At the end of quarter 2 (2024/25) there had been 59 enquiries for Durham which is an increase of 11 on the same period in 2023-24.
- 33 In respect of approval of prospective adopters there was a reduction from 41 in 2022-23 to 15 in 2023-24. There has been significant activity to increase conversions from enquiry to approval. At the end of quarter 2 (2024/25) 12 prospective adoptive families had been approved. There are a further 24 prospective adopters across stage 1, pending and stage 2.
- 34 The average time between the Local Authority achieving a Placement Order to matching children with prospective adopters has fluctuated in recent years. In 2022-23 this was 157 days rising to 180 days in 2023-24. A concerted effort to improve practice has resulted in returning to 157 days for the 12-month period to 30/09/24.

Children's Homes

- 35 The council are committed to developing a series of smaller and specialist children's home, given the increase in demand, increasing use of external children's homes and rising external placement costs.
- 36 We have established three new smaller children's homes, creating accommodation for up to six children and young people (Hudson house, Elderhurst and Copeland Barns), with the 4th home due to open in March 2025 providing accommodation for two further children (Lincoln House).
- 37 Works to develop a new edge of care home working with families on the edge of care and preventing children from entering statutory children in care services, were completed in November 2024 and the Ofsted registration process is ongoing. We were able to secure capital funding from the Department of Education to partly fund this new home.
- 38 Our new home for younger children, which will support them to step down into foster care, will open later in 2025. This will provide care for up to four children aged 5-11.
- 39 We are in the process of buying a new property that will support our plan to re-provide the Moorside Children's Home. The home will accommodate up to four children aged 12-17 and will open in early 2026.
- 40 We have secured capital and revenue funding from the Northeast and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB) to partly fund the development of a new home that provides respite / short stays to children living with their families who have a range of neuro-diverse needs (autism and mental health) to prevent their needs from escalating and preventing admission into care due to family breakdown or admission to a tier 4 mental health hospital. We are looking for a property that can meet our needs and we are carrying out some scoping work with Tees Esk and Wear Valley Foundation Trust (TEWV), our edge of care services and children's residential service to develop an enhanced clinical offer that works into this home and our edge of care services i.e., Rapid Response Service and our Edge of Care home.
- 41 A home providing medium to long-term care for children and young people with learning disabilities and other neurodevelopmental needs, will open later in 2025. A property has been identified and is subject to an ongoing planning application to change its use.
- 42 Design work has commenced which has moved us a step closer to refurbishing our Framwellgate Moor home. The home is due to open in November 2025.

- 43 We need to re-provide our short breaks home for disabled children, as the current building does not meet our needs and we have an increasing number of young people with highly complex needs who need to be able to access a short break by themselves. A feasibility study which will produce a design and high-level costs for a new build development is due to conclude in January 2025.
- 44 The Residential Programme will increase our bed numbers from 33 to 53 beds. This does not include our short break respite beds for disabled children which will provide a further eight beds.
- 45 We secured DfE funding to support the implementation of the Staying Close Pilot Programme. This programme provides much needed support to young people as they transition out of children's homes. A total of 14 young people have been supported since the pilot programme was rolled out.
- 46 Our "Durham First approach" working closely with private residential providers in Durham to make sure that children have better access to local homes, has identified 40 beds of which 30 are currently used for Durham children, following a successful matching exercise.
- 47 We launched a new Provider Engagement Forum with children's home providers. This has been operating for 12 months, is well attended, encourages open conversations with the market and partnership working and continues to receive positive feedback.

Supported Accommodation

- 48 Our Supported Accommodation Provider Panel was extended during the year to give us time for the new Ofsted regulatory requirements to embed.
- 49 We have worked closely with our supported accommodation providers offering support and ensuring that they have taken the necessary steps to regulate their services with Ofsted.
- 50 As our use of supported accommodation has continued to increase for older young people, we have worked with providers to ensure that services grow and expand to meet our needs.

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

- 51 Durham has the largest proportion of UASC in the region and to respond to this increasing demand for suitable care and support, we have expanded and developed new provision with providers to meet our needs, including developing block arrangements.

- 52 We have created a dedicated team to case manage our unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, providing improved capacity. The work of this team was externally validated by Ofsted during a focused visit in November 2023 and described as high quality and culturally sensitive.

Short Breaks for disabled children and families

- 53 A Short Breaks Strategy and Action Plan was developed, which has provided a clear improvement plan. Additional resources were invested to improve capacity within the work programme. Improved access to short breaks was acknowledged in our recent SEND inspection with good practice identified.
- 54 The universal short breaks offer has been grown by supporting small organisations with grant funding opportunities, resulting in the expansion of provision for children with SEND.
- 55 During school holidays we delivered a SEND fun and food programme to maximise opportunities for children with SEND.
- 56 We have taken a holistic and personalised approach and have commissioned flexible support solutions that can respond to need for children with non-assessed needs, to those with specialist and enhanced needs.

Newton Europe Update

- 57 Due to the substantial rise in children in care in recent years, which has been compounded by sufficiency challenges and a reduction in fostering capacity (both in-house and independent foster agencies), this has resulted in children living in children's homes when a family home environment would be preferable. This has resulted in increasing financial pressure on the children in care budget, with £30m spent on children in care placements in 2020, increasing by 143% to a forecast year end of £74m in 2024.
- 58 To support us with some initial diagnostic work, Newton Europe were appointed to look at our forecast number of children in care in future years and the projected spend over this period; to quantify the impact of existing initiatives on outcomes and spend; and to identify additional opportunities to manage demand and mitigate spend growth.
- 59 Headline findings from the work completed by Newton Europe include:
- (a) The 143% increase in children in care expenditure between 2020 and 2024, has been driven by caseload growth (23%), placement mix (30%) and a rise in unit cost (47%).

- (b) A range of mitigating actions to reduce children in care placement spend are planned, which include the development of a new edge of care home, increasing in-house children's home capacity and increasing in-house foster care capacity, however even with these developments, the forecast expenditure with these mitigations is still estimated to increase.
- (c) In order to reduce forecasted budget pressures, we need to identify further mitigations to reduce forecasted spend. This will be a cost to the council in the immediate term but will seek to prevent increasing costs in the future.
- (d) A number of additional mitigations and opportunities for change were proposed including:
 - (i) More edge of care support – targeted and intensive interventions to keep children safely with their families, reducing the number coming into care.
 - (ii) Permanence out of care – supporting children to leave care at the right time for them.
 - (iii) In-house fostering capacity – increasing the number of children supported in in-house foster care instead of Independent Fostering Agencies where appropriate.
 - (iv) Placement breakdowns – reducing the number of children escalating from family-based placements in care to residential settings.
 - (v) Sustainable pricing – ensure we have the right level of provision for each child and are paying the right cost for that provision.

60 Additional mitigations will be considered within the new work programmes, which will be launched in January 2025.

61 Whilst these proposals will be an additional cost to the council in the immediate term and will be subject to business cases, additional intervention is required to support our overall reduction in the number of children in care and to support children to remain at home where it is safe to do so

62 The work produced by the new workstreams will help to shape our new Sufficiency Strategy and its Action Plan, which will be produced in early 2025.

Conclusion

- 63 As Corporate Parents we must ensure that we have a range of good quality local placement provision that is able to meet the varying needs of our looked after children and our care leavers.
- 64 The strategy sets out our current position in being able to meet these needs and the challenges presented to us and outlines the key priorities that we have been delivering against to address gaps in provision and to broaden our local sufficiency offer for children and young people.
- 65 The Newton Europe work will be used to help inform our future sufficiency work programme, which is currently being scoped and developed, and will put in place new mitigating actions to help reduce and control our increasing expenditure on children in care.

Background papers

- None

Other useful documents

- Appendix 2 – Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for children looked after and care leavers 2022-2024.

Author(s)

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The Local Authority has a legal duty to provide sufficient accommodation options for children and young people who are looked after and those that are care leavers.

The strategy outlines a number of key priorities which will help us to continue meeting are changing needs and to minimise any reputational and political damage with regulators such as Ofsted.

Finance

There are significant financial pressures associated with the sufficiency responsibility for the council. The Durham Care Board is critical to managing and mitigating increasing children in care costs.

Consultation and Engagement

The Local Authority will be required to consult with elected members and local communities when developing many of the services as outlined in the strategy. This will be completed as part of the formal planning process.

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

New sufficiency developments (in particular, the development of new children's homes) will consider carbon reduction options such as solar panels, electric vehicle charging points and other initiatives.

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.

Crime and Disorder

Non applicable.

Staffing

The strategy sets out the development of a range of new services which will broaden and enhance our current sufficiency offer. These services will require

new staff to support their operational delivery. The recruitment of new staff is aligned with the development of new children's homes.

Accommodation

The Sufficiency Strategy provides information about the range of accommodation options available for our children and young people in care and also proposes a suite of new service developments to broaden and improve our sufficiency offer.

Risk

There is a significant risk to the Local Authority if we are unable to provide suitable local accommodation and care options for our children and young people.

There is a legal and reputational risk to the Local Authority if it is unable to safely care for children and young people and offer a broad range of placements to meet individual needs.

The report sets out the actions being taken by the Local Authority to support the reduction in future children in care costs and this will be set out in more detail in the new Sufficiency Strategy.

Procurement

When commissioning new services, the Contract Procedures Rules will be adhered to and corporate procurement colleagues involved.

Appendix 2: Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for children looked after and care leavers

Attached separately

Appendix 3: Sufficiency Priorities

No.	Overarching Objective	Priorities	Completed by
1	Grow our number of in-house foster carers, support the retention of carers and work with IFAs to ensure that children and young people can live with foster carer families when it is in their interests to do so	Recruit 35 new foster carer households in 2022/23 and a further 35 new foster carer households in 2023/24	March 2023 and March 2024
		Develop and launch the new fostering website	December 2023
		Launch the Mockingbird Model to support our in-house foster carers	July 2022
		Review the current Payment for Skills Model in consultation with foster carers, which seeks to improve our sufficiency of in-house foster carers, by attracting new carers and retaining existing carers and implement findings	October 2023
		Develop a 'wrap around support' team that will work intensively with our in-house foster carers to promote placement stability and prevent placement breakdown	March 2023
		Develop the respite foster care offer for children and young people with a disability	September 2022 – March 2024
		We will continue to work regionally with other Local Authorities to ensure that the new commissioning solution continues to be fit for purpose and to encourage off framework providers and new providers to join.	April 2022 – March 2024
		We will launch a new Provider Forum with our IFAs outside of our regional arrangements to share information about our demand, gaps in provision and to maximise effective partnership working.	September 2022

No.	Overarching Objective	Priorities	Completed by
2	Increase the number of adopters	Ensure that the transition to Adopt Coast to Coast does not impact on the recruitment improvements made in 2020-2022.	March 2024
		Work collaboratively with RAA partners to develop practice around linking and matching, to reduce the waiting time for children when being matched to their forever family.	March 2024
3	Continue to develop and broaden our residential homes offer and maximise opportunities with external providers when there is a case to do so	Develop up to 4x smaller children's homes. Two will accommodate up to two children and young people and a further two homes will accommodate one young person each. Homes to be operational in 2022 and 2023.	December 2022 and December 2023
		Develop an Edge of Care home	August 2023
		Re-provide a children's home for three young people	November 2023
		Continue to develop the residential peripatetic staffing team to support capacity and reduce the use of agency staff within homes.	April 2022 – March 2024
		Continue to have close oversight of the residential workforce to ensure that the experience and skills of the workforce continues to meet our sufficiency needs.	April 2022 – March 2024
		Continue to review the upper bedding capacity in our existing children's home, taking into account ongoing sufficiency press	April 2022 / March 2024
		Develop a step down to foster care children's home for younger children, by reviewing our existing children's home provision	March 2024

No.	Overarching Objective	Priorities	Completed by
		Develop a children's home for disabled children and young people, in line with feedback from Ofsted. We will consider both DCC and provider led options, including new build options.	March 2025
		Develop a specialist short break home which offers planned respite for up to two children / young people with complex needs. We will consider both DCC and provider led options, including new build options.	March 2025
		Develop a Staying Close Programme for a small group of identified young people	July 2022 – March 2025
		We will continue to work with providers to sustain children and young people's residential home arrangements, offering support and solutions which minimises moved for children and young people.	April 2022 – March 2024
		We will continue to work closely with providers that wish to develop new Durham First services in County Durham, to shape services and to positively challenge development when this does not meet our needs.	April 2022 / March 2024
		We will review our potential future use of parent and child residential units and encourage providers to develop these services when there is an identified need.	March 2024
		We will explore options for working in partnership with a provider to develop a solo / dual registered children's home in County Durham, specifically for our use.	April 2022 – March 2024
		We will continue to play an active role in the NE12 regional consortia, working with neighbouring Local Authorities, to understand regional challenges, demand and to work collaboratively.	April 2022 – March 2024

No.	Overarching Objective	Priorities	Completed by
		We will launch a new Provider Engagement Forum with our residential homes providers. This will be specific to Durham’s local needs.	July 2022
		We will work with health partners to develop a new registered step down from hospital offer to meet the needs of children and young people with ongoing mental health needs.	March 2024
		As our capacity increases within in-house residential home provision, we will review our out of county placements, to understand which children and young people have a plan to move back into the area.	Ongoing
4	Develop access to a diverse range of appropriate accommodation for Care Leavers	Review the marketing and recruitment strategy for Supported Lodging providers	March 2023
		We will open up the Supported Accommodation Provider Panel for young people with complex needs, broadening our pool of providers.	October 2022
		Establish a new Provider Engagement Forum with supported accommodation providers.	September 2022
		Work with supported accommodation providers in relation to the regulation of provision, to understand any potential impact or emerging gaps in provision.	August 2022 – March 2024
5	Improve our sufficiency offer for UASC and reduce waiting times	Work with local supported accommodation providers to explore the extension of existing services to meet our increasing accommodation and support needs for UASC.	December 2022
		Consider options and funding opportunities to develop a local supported accommodation and assessment hub, which will assess UASC over a 6 – 12-week period, before moving young people	December 2022

No.	Overarching Objective	Priorities	Completed by
		onto suitable long-term supported accommodation.	
		Develop a new supported accommodation assessment service for UASC	September 2023
		Continue to work in partnership with regional LAs to explore opportunities for joint commissioning	April 2022 – March 2024
6	Broaden our short breaks offer for disabled children and their families	Develop a Short Breaks Sufficiency Action Plan which highlights the range of actions that will be taken forward to address the ongoing challenges and gaps in provision, and to improve both the universal and statutory short breaks offer for children, young people and their families / carers	July 2022
		<p>Deliver a programme of non-assessed community short break improvements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Ensure that organisations maximise inclusion for disabled children in community activities across County Durham and have the right skills and experience to respond to young people's needs. (b) Further invest to enable children and young people with disabilities to access local universal activities, ensuring that parents / carers access regular breaks when these are needed and reducing the reliance on commissioned assessed services, preventing escalation of family needs. (c) Continue to commission a menu of community activities for children unable to access the community due to their disability, without the need for a statutory assessment, whilst ensuring that providers are upskilled to respond to specialist needs. 	July 2022 – March 2024

No.	Overarching Objective	Priorities	Completed by
		<p>Deliver a programme of assessed specialist enhanced short breaks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Ensure that the provider market has the capacity, experience and skills to meet to children and young people’s short break needs, either at home, in the community or in a residential setting. (b) Develop specialist and inclusive community hubs to enable complex young people to be supported within their local area. (c) Review overnight respite provision at Park House, alongside the wider overnight respite offer in the region, propose options to meet all needs, including those young people with complex disabilities / challenging behaviours that post a risk to other children. Develop a model and service provision for overnight respite (this action overlaps with Priority Number 9 within the In-House Residential Homes section of this strategy). (d) Change our commissioning approach to block investment with existing providers to develop, stabilise and upskill the workforce so it can respond to short break demand, particularly for those young people with autism and challenging behaviours. 	<p>July 2022 – March 2024</p>