

Corporate Parenting Panel

25 May 2018

Placement of Looked After Children Out of Area



Report of Karen Robb Strategic Manager Looked After Children and Permanence

Purpose of Report

- 1 To provide Elected Members with accurate and up to date information in respect of looked after children placed out of the Local Authority boundary.

Background

- 2 An out of area placement is classified as one outside of the Councils' geographical boundary but within an authority that it shares a boundary with. For Durham an example would be Gateshead. Placements outside of this are referred to as "at a distance" placements
- 3 All Local Authorities have a statutory duty under legislation to formally notify the Local Authority area where a child is placed that he/she is there and the details of their placement and supervising arrangements. **Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 with guidance included in Volume 2 of the Children Act Guidance.**
- 4 This applies to Local Authorities who place looked after children within Durham but also for ourselves who place looked after children in other Local Authority areas. Routine checks in relation to compliance with this are undertaken, and at all Looked After Reviews the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) will ensure this issue is discussed.
- 5 Each Council nominates a responsible officer and if a child or young person is placed within a residential establishment then the Director of Children Services should give formal approval to it.
- 6 Every Local Authority is required by statutory regulations to have in place a Sufficiency Duty which states that as far as possible it is taking adequate steps to ensure it has sufficient placements for looked after children within its own area who require care, accommodation and support. **Children Act 1989 Section 22(G)**. This is referred to as a "sufficiency duty".
- 7 There are often clear reasons why a young person may need to be placed out of the area for example for safety and protection from further harm or if he/she is placed with family and friends or with a parent and is subject to a legal order where the Local Authority has parental responsibility for the child. Some children and young people may require specialist services which are

not available locally, for example if they have complex needs arising from a health need or disability.

- 8 Elected Members need to be routinely provided with the details of the children and young people who are placed outside of the Local Authority boundary to be reassured that these arrangements are appropriate for the child, are made to meet their specific needs in accordance with their care plan and are regularly reviewed and monitored.

Numbers of children placed outside of the Local Authority boundary and their location

- 9 There are currently 202 looked after children placed outside of the County boundary. The largest number of these are children placed with foster carers or family and friends foster carers; a total of 105, and a further 20 are placed for adoption. The next cohort of children, 14 in number are placed within residential settings either as part of their Education, Health and Care Plan or therapeutic residential provision that cannot be met in house. The remaining number of children are a combination of supported lodging arrangements, placed under Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations or in Youth Offenders Institutions on remand for criminal offences.
- 10 In relation to geography out of the 202 looked after children, only 16 of these young people live outside of the North East Region, the majority of these are placed awaiting adoption or with relatives who are approved as family and friends. This is very positive.

Placement of looked after children in external residential settings

- 11 Where a looked after child requires a placement in an external resource arising from their assessed needs or at times due to insufficient capacity within in house resources, a number of issues are considered prior to making the placement. All placements of this nature are made through the NE12 Regional Commissioning Framework.
- 12 Children and Young People's Services will not use any provision, which is not rated as Good, or Outstanding with Ofsted. Prior to any placement being considered the latest Ofsted reports are considered by the Placements Service in conjunction with Commissioning Colleagues. In addition, a number of other checks are carried out which include checking safeguarding and Health and Safety policies and procedures, in addition to assessing their financial viability and their insurance liabilities.
- 13 Further checks will also be carried out in relation to the safety of the local area and with the Local Authority where the establishment is located. Any other Local Authorities who have children already placed in any establishment are also contacted to ensure they are satisfied with the provision.

- 14 Once a placement is made, regular contract monitoring takes place with Residential Managers and Commissioning to ensure the required standards are met. This is in addition to the Care Planning and Review requirements and visiting patterns of the children's social workers and IRO's.

Recommendations

- 15 The Corporate Parent Panel is:
- (a) Provided with information to offer reassurance that looked after children and young people are only placed at some distance away when it is consistent with their needs and Care Plans to do so. The majority of our looked after children in out of area arrangements are within the North East. Their Care Plans are reviewed regularly under our current arrangements and children are visited in accordance with statutory requirements.
 - (b) Requested to note the report and raise any further queries for discussion.

Contact: Karen Robb Strategic Manager Looked After Children and Permanence Tel: 03000 265759

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance - Children and young people placed particularly in residential placements are very costly to the service and these arrangements are very closely monitored and scrutinised to ensure they provide consistent good quality care and education.

Staffing – Children and young people placed outside of the County and those further away place additional pressures on social work caseloads due to travelling time and the need to respond to crisis at times. The service aims to use these placements only in exceptional circumstances and where there is an assessed need which is consistent with the child's Care Plan.

Risk – Children and young people placed further away from their home area are deemed to be more vulnerable and may be at risk of going missing from home where they may be at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation and other forms of harm. These young people require and receive regular visiting and monitoring to ensure they are adequately cared for and safeguarded.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty – None

Accommodation – Every Local Authority is required by statutory regulations to have in place a Sufficiency Duty which states that as far as possible it is taking adequate steps to ensure it has sufficient placements for looked after children within its own area who require care accommodation and support. **Children Act 1989 Section 22G**. This is referred to as a “sufficiency duty”. Durham CYPS has this Strategy in place and it is publicised on the Council Website.

Crime and Disorder – For young people placed out of area there must be an assessment of the area where the establishment is located to ensure it is safe and does not have increased levels of crime or anti-social behaviour which may increase the vulnerability of looked after children and young people.

Human Rights – None

Consultation – None

Procurement – None

Disability Issues - None

Legal Implications – The Children Act 1989 Section 22(G) requires the Local Authority to have in place a Sufficiency Strategy. This is referred to as a “sufficiency duty”. The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 with guidance included in Volume 2 of the Children Act Guidance sets out the requirements which local authorities must follow when placing children out of area.