



Northumberland

County Council

FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3 FEBRUARY 2022

Children in Care and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2022 – 24

Report of Cath McEvoy-Carr, Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services

Cabinet Member for Children's Services: Councillor Guy Renner-Thompson

Purpose of report

This report is presented to outline the key issues, challenges in relation to placement sufficiency for children in care. The Northumberland's Children in Care and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2022 – 24 is presented for the Board's approval – see appendix A.

Recommendations

To note the contents of the report and make any comments for inclusion in the Children in Care and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2022 – 24.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report links to the Living priority of the NCC Corporate Plan 2018-2022

Key issues

1. To ensure that NCC is meeting its sufficiency duties being delivered through the Northumberland's Children in Care and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2022 - 24.
2. The report identifies areas where NCC has been doing well in its provision of placements and areas of challenge.
3. The review and development of the local sufficiency strategy needs to be seen in the context of national challenges and developments in the provision of placements for children looked after.
4. The strategy has been developed in line with guidance issued by the Local Government Association (LGA) to support consistency of approach and increase opportunities for national collation and sharing of data and information in this crucial area of service provision.

Background

Children in Care and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2022 – 24 sets out the Council's approach to meeting its responsibilities to provide secure, safe and appropriate accommodation to children in care and care leavers. It sets out the overall approach to managing demand, focusing on the right solutions and ensures that we fulfil our sufficiency duties. The strategy identifies appropriate planning and delivery of sufficient and high-quality placements and associated support, so that every child who is looked after achieves their potential. To ensure this strategy is robust, we have drawn on a wide range of available data, including historical trend, comparator data, and current service data which gives us evidence of trends and needs around placement provision so we can develop the right resources.

As corporate parents, underpinned by our leadership pledge, we will strive to provide the best quality care and support to our children in care and care leavers that we can. We recognise the importance of safe and secure placements to ensure children in our care live happy, healthy lives and achieve the best possible outcomes that they can. This is provided through well supported placements that meet the child's needs. We will place our children in a family setting wherever we can, unless their needs are better met in residential or other care settings.

An update was provided to the Board on the 4th November 2021 that gave an overview of the current position within Northumberland in relation to placements for children in care.

Sufficiency Duty

The duty to provide or procure placements for Children Looked After (Children in Care) is explicit in the Children Act 1989. These regulations require a strategy to be in place that describes how local authorities intend to provide sufficient care placements for its children in care. The introduction of Sufficiency Statutory Guidance (2010) and the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations has provided further clarity on the implementation of section 22G of the Act.

The Statutory Guidance sets out a requirement for local authorities to work with key partners to be able to secure, where reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for children in care which meets the needs of children and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation that is in the local authority's area.

Future Actions

This strategy sets out the overall approach to managing demand, focusing specifically on the right solutions. It identifies appropriate planning and delivery of sufficient and high-quality placements and associated support, so that every child who is looked after achieves their potential.

The sufficiency strategy shows how we have analysed our data, giving detailed actions and responses that we have already put in place and identifying those we need to develop further. We have identified future challenges and planned actions to respond to the needs

of our looked after population of children and young people and we will develop those into an action plan to support the implementation of this sufficiency strategy.

We have also identified the national challenges and developments to which we will need to respond as national actions are also required to improve placement sufficiency. This included the national independent review of Children's Social Care and the findings from the State of the Nation Foster Care Survey.

It remains the case that providing stable placements in a timely way for our children in care is crucial in ensuring we give them the best chance to make the most of their lives and the implementation of this strategy is a key element of this.

Conclusion

Updating the Sufficiency Strategy is a priority to ensure this reflects Northumberland's vision and priorities for children in our care. We have identified future challenges and planned actions to respond to the needs of our looked after population of children and young people and we will develop those into an action plan to support the implementation of this sufficiency strategy.

The sufficiency strategy should be seen alongside our continuous improvement plan and our corporate parenting strategy and action plan.

Implications

Policy	Children in Care and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2022 - 24
Finance and value for money	Capital funds have been agreed corporately in relation to children homes new builds. Revenue for staffing the new builds has been proposed through an invest to save proposal. All budgets are closely monitored to ensure value for money regarding the placements and provision it provides.
Legal	Statutory responsibility as corporate parents
Procurement	
Human Resources	HR implications for staffing new residential units
Property	
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	
Risk Assessment	This report is part of the Risk Management systems in place to check on the standards and service provision for looked after children and care leavers
Crime & Disorder	
Customer Consideration	
Carbon reduction	
Health and Wellbeing	Improvements to the health and wellbeing of our children in care and care leavers
Wards	All

Report sign off

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Jan Willis
Relevant Executive Director	Cath McEvoy-Carr
Chief Executive	
Portfolio Holder(s)	Guy Renner-Thompson

Author and Contact Details

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