

Corporate Parenting Board

12/02/2020

Placement Sufficiency

For Decision

Portfolio Holder: Cllr A Parry, Children, Education and Early Help

Executive Director: Theresa Leavy, Interim Lead for Children's Services

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Report Status: Public

Recommendation: That the Board note current plans to deliver the Council's sufficiency duty for placements for children in care and care leavers.

Reason for Recommendation: Regular progress reports are made to Board on this issue.

1. Executive Summary

1.1 The September 2019 Cabinet report Children's Residential Provision recommended the following strategy for placement sufficiency:

- Change commissioning approach - block contracting, or a similar vehicle, to identify providers who will guarantee access to a number of placements
- Hybrid provision - where DC owns or leases properties which providers use to run children's homes, or which are directly provided by DC.
- Use existing, or new, sources of capital investment, such as a Social Impact Bond, to buy or build additional capacity in the residential estate for Dorset

1.2 This paper gives an update on progress since then.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 This strategy is intended to deliver efficiencies by:
- Ensuring supply and price stability
 - Ensuring better value for money and better outcomes for children
 - Ensuring that more council expenditure is recirculated in the local economy

3. Climate implications

- 3.1 This strategy is intended to contribute to emissions reduction by reducing travel requirements.

4. Other Implications

- 4.1 This strategy will contribute to the safeguarding of children, and the sustainability of council services and the local economy

5. Risk Assessment

- 5.1 Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:
- Current Risk: High- Financial/Reputation- the rate of increase of numbers of children in care remains high, and it will take time to reshape the market. There is therefore a risk of continued pressure on the budget, and the risk that children will need to be placed in distant placements.
 - Residual Risk: High – as above

6. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.1 Our approach to this strategy is rights based, and rooted in our design principles of co-production, and making the voices of children and families central to all that do. There is no current EQIA, but the 2020-21 Sufficiency Plan will address equality issues.

7. Appendices

- 7.1 Children in Care and Care Leavers Placement Sufficiency Strategy (Update April 2019)

8. Background Papers

- 8.1 Looked After Children Reduction case for Change
- 8.2 Looked After Children Reduction case for Change
- 8.3 Children's Residential Provision

9. Commissioning approach

- 9.1 A successful market engagement day was held with both residential and fostering providers in September.
- 9.2 Residential providers with homes in Dorset are keen to move to block contract and this process has begun. However, in some cases, there are children placed by other local authorities in these homes and they will need to move on before we can become sole users of the facility. There are a total of 8 beds in 3 homes which could come under these arrangements. Currently, we have two beds blocked, and will be proceeding to confirming a third.
- 9.3 Other residential providers are keen to move into Dorset by acquiring and registering suitable properties. They would be potentially be interested in leasing suitable DC properties which we declare surplus. We are developing our relationships with providers and with the regional Ofsted team to ensure that the South West is an attractive place to register new provision.
- 9.4 There are several constraints on further development – time to source and adapt properties, the length of the registration process with Ofsted, and the need to recruit and train a staff team. The consensus is that residential provision needs to be part of a cluster to provide resilience.
- 9.5 Fostering providers are generally less open to block contract approaches, but there is willingness to move to first refusal on carers who live in Dorset for Dorset children, and an openness to look at developing specific schemes – such as short breaks, or step-down foster care linked to residential provision.
- 9.6 There are gaps are in fostering placements for teenagers, parent and family placements, and where there are specific matching issues - for example, those who cannot be placed in a household with other children and/or pets. Our market position statement returns to the South West survey identified the following areas for our main placement needs.
 - Retained emergency carers

- Staying Put placements 18+
- Placements for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children
- Placements for 16/17-year olds
- Placements for children who have offending behaviour / remand beds
- Younger children with Social Emotional and Mental Health needs
- Placements for children at risk of Criminal Exploitation
- Placement for teenagers with complex needs, including non-CIS gender teenagers

10. Hybrid provision

We have existing partnerships where care providers are looking after young people in our properties. This would also be an option which would need to be evaluated in any business case for capital development.

11. Capital Investment

- 11.1 The corporate review of estates is identifying properties which could be repurposed as children's homes or supported accommodation. Business cases are being prepared for Cabinet in respect of these properties as they are identified.
- 11.2 People - Children are also stakeholders in the [Building Better Lives](#) programme, and we are actively involved in looking at the opportunities and potential of each BBL development.

12. Other developments

- 12.1 Blueprint for Change is a programme to reorganise the way services for children are delivered by moving to locality based multi-professional working. Early help, school support and social work staff will be jointly managed in integrated teams based in defined localities. This is expected, over time, to reduce the number of children entering the care system.
- 12.2 Modernising Fostering is a project to reconfigure our in-house service to meet our changing needs and increase the supply and resilience of in-house foster carers. The table below shows the gap in our ability to make in house placements.

Financial year	Type of placement	Expected numbers of children	Budget (£)	Actual numbers of children	Actual expenditure (£)	Under/overspend (£)
2019/20	IFA	81	3,272,200	90	4,449,178	1,217,978
	In-house	231	5,126,900	198	4,159,265	967,635
	Total	312	8,399,100	285	8,649,443	250,343
2018/19	IFA	47	2,099,200	100	4,943,662	2,844,462
	In-house	203	4,508,400	197	3,891,994	616,406
	Total	250	6,607,600	297	8,835,656	2,228,056
2017/18	IFA	41	1,899,200	107	4,799,385	2,900,185
	In-house	220	4,341,591	208	3,181,589	1,160,002
	Total	261	6,240,791	315	7,980,974	1,740,183

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.