

Corporate Parenting Board

9 September 2020

Children in Care Placement Sufficiency Approach

For Decision

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

Local Councillor(s): Cllr

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

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Report Status: Public

Recommendation: That the Board agree the Children in Care Placement Sufficiency Strategy for 2020-22

Reason for Recommendation:

1. Executive Summary

The Children Act 1989 (section 22g) requires local authorities to take steps that are reasonably practicable to secure sufficient accommodation for children and young people under their care who cannot live at home and whose circumstances indicate that it would be in their best interests to be accommodated within the local authority's area, so that they can see their family and stay at the same school. This is commonly known as the 'sufficiency duty'.

The attached paper summarises Dorset Council's approach for securing sufficient accommodation for children in care. At the end of July, 38% of children in the care of Dorset Council were accommodated outside the Dorset Council area. In the majority of cases, this would not be necessary to meet the needs or

ensure the safety of each child and will have resulted in disruption to family ties, friendships and education. In addition, this represents a substantial loss to the Dorset economy as goods and services are procured outside of Dorset.

This approach highlights key areas of concern and sets out the steps that Children's Services and partners will be taking to improve the situation. Some actions, such as the building of a new children's home in Weymouth are well underway. All lines of action will be underpinned by a robust deployment plan.

The full strategy document is under construction and will be produced and brought back to the board. The plan will be refreshed annually in order to address any new and emerging issues.

2. Financial Implications

The strategy is intended to improve the overall financial position of Dorset Council by increasing the influence of the council on the market, reduces ancillary costs such as travel, and increasing the proportion of spend within the local economy.

3. Climate implications

The strategy aims to reduce the impact on the climate by ensuring that the proportion of children in care accommodated in Dorset increases.

4. Other Implications

There are property and asset implications in the strategy, which are detailed in the September 2019 Cabinet paper "Children's Residential Care"

5. Risk Assessment

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low
Residual Risk: Low

6. Equalities Impact Assessment

NA

7. Appendices

Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2020-23

8. Background Papers

[Children's Residential Care – 3 September 2019](#)

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.