

**Dorset Council**

**Sufficiency Strategy for Children in Care  
and Care Leavers**

**People and Health Overview Committee  
6 February 2024**



# Sufficiency Duty

- Every local authority has a duty set out in legislation to provide sufficient care placements and accommodation in their area for its children in care and care leavers
- This is known as the **Sufficiency Duty**

# Our Care Family

- 450 children in care in total
- 59 of these are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children
- 542 care leavers – 309 receiving a service

# Achievements from our most recent Strategy

- We reduced the number of children in care
- We reduced the proportion placed out of area
- We increased the number of children's home places in Dorset
- We increased the number of our children in in-house foster care
- We implemented the Mockingbird model of fostering provision
- We implemented a new framework for supported accommodation
- We established the Harbour adolescent service
- We have opened our own childrens home provision and 12 care leaver flats



# Sufficiency Strategy 2024–2027 – Our Seven Strategic Priorities

1. Support more children to stay with their birth parents or within their wider family networks
2. Increase the provision of local, high quality foster care so that more children who cannot live with birth family are provided with alternative family-based care.
3. Only place children and young people in residential care where their needs cannot be met within a family, and to increase local provision so that when we do so, we do not place them at distance
4. Increase and improve specialist provision for children and young people with significant mental health and /or complex needs

## **Sufficiency Strategy 2023–2026 – Our Seven Strategic Priorities - 2**

5. Secure timely permanence outside of care through adoption and special guardianship for all children for whom this is in their best interests
6. Raise our ambitions for our care leavers and increase the quantity, quality and range of care leaver accommodation and support to promote stability, safety, and emotional wellbeing
7. Manage placement resources effectively

## **Strategic Priority 1 - We will support more children to stay with their birth parents or within their wider family networks**

- Implement the Families First Pathfinder and Family Network Strategy support families to stay together
- Extend Safeguarding Families Together provision
- Develop and Harbour East adolescent service in East Dorset
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- Open Hayeswood short break childrens home for children with a disability

## **Strategic Priority 2 - We will increase the provision of local, high quality foster care so that more children who cannot live with birth family are provided with alternative family-based care**

- Implement targeted foster carer recruitment and retention strategy
- Engage in South West regional recruitment hub
- Provide capital funds for foster carer home extensions and adaptations





## **Strategic Priority 3 - We will only place children and young people in residential care where their needs cannot be met within a family, and to increase local provision so that when we do so, we do not place them at distance**

- Open Chestnut House childrens home for disabled children
- Open a further one bed in-house home
- Support the independent sector to develop more local provision

## **Strategic Priority 4 - We will increase and improve specialist provision for children and young people with significant mental health and /or complex needs**

- Work with regional partners and health colleagues to develop residential provision for children with complex needs
- Increase the number of shared lives carers for young people aged 16 to 25 as part of Birth to Settled Adulthood service

## **Strategic Priority 5 - We will secure timely permanence outside of care through adoption and special guardianship for all children for whom this is in their best interests**

- Support Aspire to implement a new adopter recruitment strategy
- Bring the Special Guardianship Service back in-house from Aspire as part of a new 'Connected Persons' service
- Support wider birth family members to secure Special Guardianship Orders for children early on where it is in their best interests

## **Strategic Priority 6 - We will raise our ambitions for our care leavers and increase the quantity, quality and range of care leaver accommodation and support to promote stability, safety, and emotional wellbeing**

- Support more foster carers to provide Staying Put accommodation
- Embed Staying Close as a wraparound support offer to care leavers
- Bid for capital funds to acquire/build 20 additional self-contained flats for care leavers



## Strategic Priority 7 - We will manage placement resources effectively

- Review and revise placement resource panels to improve management and review of placements resources and costs
- Improve our referral pathways
- Improve data collection

# How will we know we have been successful

- We will have a lower number of children in care
- More of our children in care will be in foster placements
- Fewer children will be in residential placements and more of those will be living in Dorset
- We will have developed joint provision with health colleagues for children with complex needs
- A higher proportion of children will leave care via adoption or special guardianship
- No care leavers will be in bed and breakfast and we will have more of our own provision for them

