

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE		
<b>Report Title</b>	Children's Social Care Commissioning & Sufficiency Strategy and LAC Commissioning Plan (2017-2019)	
<b>Key Decision</b>	No	Item No. 8
<b>Ward</b>	All	
<b>Contributors</b>	Jean Imray, Interim Director of Children's Social Care	
<b>Class</b>	Part 1	Date: 5 <sup>th</sup> September 2018

### 1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 This report gives an update on the CYP Directorate's work to improve the commissioning of care placements, ensuring that there are sufficient high quality placements for looked after children and young people and that value for money is delivered.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To note that following review, a revised and updated Children's Placement Sufficiency Strategy is being produced to outline the key challenges and set out a sound sufficiency response to enable the Council to meet the accommodation and support needs of children and young people in Lewisham and hence its statutory sufficiency duty under 22(G) of the Children Act 1989.
- 2.2 To note that the revised Sufficiency Strategy will inform the development of the 3-5 year Medium Term Financial Strategy for Children's Services.
- 2.3 That a revised Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy is provided to the Children and Young People Select Committee in November 2018.

### 3. Background

- 3.1 The current Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy 2017-2019 was completed in March 2017. It focuses on placements for Care Leavers and Looked After Children (LAC) and associated services. It set out how Lewisham intended to meet the Sufficiency Duty as outlined in Section 22G of the Children Act 1989.
- 3.2 A focus on placement availability and choice for children and young people of all ages, combined with greater clarity about the source of pressures in the placement budget, has led to an understanding that the current Sufficiency Strategy is not having the required impact and subsequently is in need of review.
- 3.3 The Strategy has been reviewed and this has identified that it needs to be repositioned to better articulate the key challenges that Lewisham faces in achieving sufficiency for children and young people across the borough. The strategic commissioning response has to be strengthened to overcome the key challenges that have been identified. In addition, the redrafted Sufficiency Strategy has to be directly related to a

sustainable budget for Children's Social Care, which delivers the cost reductions and improved outcomes for children and young people.

#### **4. Policy context**

4.1 The approach taken to meeting the Sufficiency Duty for placements is consistent with 'Shaping Our Future: Lewisham's Sustainable Community Strategy' and the Council's corporate priorities. In particular, it is aligned with the Council's strategic priorities regarding Young People's Achievement and Involvement, the Protection of Children, and Efficiency, Effectiveness and Equity.

4.2 The aspiration to have high quality and varied provision in place aligns with the Council's strategic priorities concerning the commissioning of services for Lewisham Looked After Children by encouraging them to be:

- ambitious and achieving, safer,
- empowered and responsible,
- healthy and active,
- living in high quality homes,

all of which should enable them to feel supported and inspired to achieve their full potential. Improved placement stability for our LAC will better support them to achieve the life outcomes that Lewisham want for our young people.

4.3 The approach to the refreshed Sufficiency Strategy is consistent with the priorities detailed in our Lewisham's Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) 2015-18. In particular:

- Preventing poor outcomes and escalation of need, including for children in families at risk of crisis through early intervention (BR2)
- Providing stable and consistent support for our Looked After Children (BR5)
- Ensuring our Looked After Children are healthy (HA7)
- Raising achievement and attainment for our Looked After Children at all key stages and Post 16 (AA7)
- Ensuring our Looked After Children are Safe(SS3)
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4.4 In Lewisham we want the same things for the children and young people we look after as any good parent would want for their child. We want our children to be healthy and happy in childhood. We want them to feel valued for who they are and to feel loved. We want them to enjoy learning and to benefit from the experience. We want them to achieve their full potential and be able to fulfil their own personal ambitions and goals. We want them to grow into well adjusted, emotionally balanced individuals who will experience positive relationships in adulthood. We want them to become responsible citizens and be able to be good parents to their own children when the time comes. Our vision is that we will achieve this by providing the highest quality of care delivered through the services for which we are both responsible and accountable.

4.5 Securing sufficient accommodation that meets the needs of children who are in care is a statutory requirement for all Local Authorities. Having the right placement in the right place, at the right time, are vital factors in achieving placement stability, which itself is critical factor to securing better outcomes for children. The statutory guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for in care children provides clarification on the

'sufficiency duty' placed on local authorities under 22(G) of the Children Act 1989, to secure sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of children in their care.

- 4.6 The sufficiency duty applies in respect of all children who are defined as 'looked after' under the 1989 Act. An important mechanism – both in improving outcomes for children and in having sufficient accommodation to meet their needs – is to take earlier, preventive action to support children and families so that fewer children and young people come into care.
- 4.7 The guidance requires that, working with their partners, local authorities must be in a position to secure, where reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for looked after children in their local authority area.

## **5. Redrafting the Sufficiency Strategy (2018-2020)**

5.1 The purpose of a Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy is to achieve better outcomes for children and young people who are in the care of the Local Authority. It requires:

- An understanding of the numbers and profiles of the children, young people and young adults requiring placements currently.
- Prediction of demand as far into the future as possible
- An understanding of the local, regional and national placement market
- A strategy for growing the local placement market and to engage proactively and positively with them
- A strategy for encouraging local providers to work as partners as well as competitors
- An understanding that in-house provision also has to compete at every level with independent providers in terms of cost, quality and market responsiveness
- A commitment to work across LA boundaries in order to secure advantageous regional or sub regional contracting and economies of scale opportunities
- Synergy across the service and beyond in terms of the approach taken when working with children and their families. First and foremost this means working to ensure that children and young people should be supported to remain in their families or return to their families whenever it is safe to do so.
- Access to and value for money from specialist provision for our most complex and or challenging young people is improved
- Access to best value accommodation for Care Leavers that promotes independent living, with the necessary support, at the earliest possible stage.

5.2 The redrafted Sufficiency Strategy will also be informed by the following principles:

- Children should only be kept in care for the minimum amount of time that is required to make permanent and sustainable plans for them. Permanency planning starts from the decision that a child needs to come into care and continues until the child's future is secure.
- Children are entitled to be listened to and respected as individuals. Children are entitled to participate, as fully as their age and understanding enables them, in decisions that affect them. We must ensure that children's views and individual needs are considered when making decisions that affect their lives.
- Services will aim to reduce the involvement of children and young people in criminal activities and to ensure children are not deprived of their liberty except in

exceptional circumstances, and in accordance with legal and departmental processes.

- Young people leaving care should receive positive preparation and support so that they are enabled to participate fully as active citizens once they reach adulthood. Significant attention will always be given to preparing and implementing Pathway Plans with young people and providing support and guidance so that opportunities to engage in education, employment and training are maximised.
- Children and young people should be placed as close to their local community as possible unless there is clear evidence that this is not in their best interests.
- Disabled children should have the same rights as other children and the above principles will always apply equally to them.

5.3 Work is currently underway to redraft a Sufficiency Strategy which will be better positioned to provide a sound sufficiency response to overcoming the key challenges that Lewisham faces in achieving sufficiency for children and young people across the borough. The strategic commissioning response will be strengthened to overcome the key challenges that have been identified. For example, there are currently insufficient in-house foster care placements to meet the range of needs presented by Lewisham's current care population. The redrafted Sufficiency Strategy will inform the development of a 3-5 year Medium Term Financial Strategy for Children's Services.

5.4 Providing a sound commissioning response to the challenges will require a change in the current commissioning approach which will mean:

- the rethinking and redesign of services and the way work is undertaken with families,
- practice improvement,
- investing in the right support at the right time,
- enhancing early help and prevention so that fewer children come into care in the first place.

5.5 The redrafted Strategy will also focus on the effective management of the market in relation to efficiencies in the management and quality assurance of providers to shape a robust market offer. It will ensure that the local in-house and external market are managed as 'one' and developed over time so children and young people who remain in our care are able to continue to live in a family setting with the right support within or close to the Borough. This will bring greater economies of scale, greater transparency and accountability and the ability to respond rapidly to provider failure.

5.6 The work in relation to the refresh of the Sufficiency Strategy will inform a 3-5 year Medium Term Financial Strategy and is being undertaken at pace. This includes a wide range of activities related to commissioning, practice improvement and review of individual placements which has informed a planned approach to the changes required for Lewisham to meet its Sufficiency Duty.

## **6. Financial implications**

6.1 The Sufficiency Strategy is key to addressing the budget overspend in Children's Social Care (£12.6m after use of reserves). The redrafted Sufficiency Strategy will set out the challenges faced in meeting the sufficiency duty in Lewisham. Strategic priorities will be identified and actions and interventions proposed, that when implemented will mean Lewisham is better placed to meet the sufficiency challenge

and deliver a financially sustainable Children's Services. The outcome of the Strategy will be to reduce costs over time linked to a 3-5 year Medium Term Financial Strategy.

6.2 The intention is to develop a range of preventative interventions, some of which will require investment to deliver the necessary cost reductions and improved outcomes for children and young people in Lewisham but which ultimately will result in cost reduction. This will include:

- Supporting children and young people on the 'edge of care' to stay at home
- Returning children to their birth/extended families when safe to do so
- Supporting permanency through Adoption and special guardianship
- Placement commissioning and development
- Support around the placement to meet the individual needs of the child/young person and carer (including Social Emotional Mental Health needs)

6.3 The placements budget last year 2017/18 was £21.2m, with a spend of £29.3m. It thus overspent by £8.1m. This represents 57% of overall CSC Departmental position. Hence the need for strategic review and redesign as proposed in this report

## **7. Legal Implications**

7.1 The statutory guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for in care children provides clarification on the 'sufficiency duty' placed on local authorities under 22(G) of the Children Act 1989, to secure sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of children in their care.

## **8. Crime and Disorder Implications**

8.1 There are occasions when young people come into care as a result of criminal activities for example they may be remanded into the care of the Local Authority. Ensuring that these young people and others, who may be involved in or on the fringes of crime, have placements that maximise opportunities to divert them from negative influences and reengage them in positive activities and education is key to safeguarding and promoting their welfare.

## **9. Equalities Implications**

9.1 The sufficiency duty requires placements to be provided so that no group is disadvantaged by care that fails to meet their needs based on gender, ethnicity, religion or disability.

## **10. Environmental Implications**

10.1 There are no specific environmental implications identified at this time.

## **11. Conclusion**

11.1 Committee members are asked to note that a redrafted Sufficiency Strategy will:

- take full account of a reappraised care and financial landscape
- outline the key challenges
- outline the commissioning response to meeting the accommodation and support needs of children and young people
- inform the further development of a 3-5 year Medium Term Financial Strategy for Children's Services which will deliver both cost reductions and improved outcomes for children and young people in Lewisham.

**Background documents and originator**

None

If there are any queries regarding this report, please contact Jean Imray, Interim Director, Children's Social Care on 0208 314 8140.