

Draft Residential Services Strategy

To: Children and Young People Committee

Meeting Date: 27th June 2023

From: Service Director: Commissioning

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: Yes

Forward Plan ref: KD2023/065

Outcome: The Committee is asked to consider the Residential Services Strategy and the assessment of Cambridgeshire's need to enhance the sufficiency of residential children's homes for the benefit of Cambridgeshire's Children in Care.

Recommendation: The Committee is asked to endorse the Residential Services Strategy.

Voting arrangements: Co-opted members of the committee are eligible to vote on this report.

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Member contacts:

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1. Background

- 1.1 Local Authorities are required to take steps to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for children in care within their local area. In 2010, the statutory guidance for the Sufficiency Duty was issued. This guidance is explicit in placing a duty on local authorities to act strategically to address gaps in provision by ensuring that they include, in relevant commissioning strategies, their plans for meeting the sufficiency duty.
- 1.2 The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 defines sufficiency as “a whole system approach which delivers early intervention and preventative work to help support children and their families where possible, as well as providing better services for children if they do become looked after. For those who are looked after, Local Authorities and their Children’s partners should seek to secure a number of providers and a range of services, with the aim of meeting the wide-ranging needs of looked after children and young people within their local area”. Under the guidance, the sufficiency duty is described as follows:
- From April 2010, local authorities will include in relevant commissioning strategies their plans for meeting the sufficiency duty.
 - From April 2011 working with their partners, local authorities must be in a position to secure, where reasonably practical, sufficient accommodation for children in care in their local authority area.
- 1.3 Cambridgeshire County Council’s statutory duties and strategic aims underpin our requirement to ensure that our Sufficiency responsibilities are comprehensively met now, and in the future. Our changing profile of children in care clearly indicates the need for residential provision locally for our children and young people in care with complex needs.
- 1.4 This strategy has been developed as a result of [Cambridgeshire’s Sufficiency Statement for Children in Care](#).

2 Main Issues

- 2.1 For many children and young people in care, living in a family-based environment (i.e. with family or friends, or with foster carers via our in house service or externally commissioned provisions) is in their best interests; for a smaller cohort of children in care residential children’s homes are identified as the most suitable place for a child’s needs to be met.
- 2.2 Residential children’s homes represent a critical element of Cambridgeshire’s provision available to our Children in Care. Equally critical is the need to enable access to these homes within Cambridgeshire, enabling children (where it is safe and appropriate to do so) to remain living in their local area, close to family and friends, to continue going to their schools, and to access consistent health services.
- 2.3 Currently there is no provision in Cambridgeshire for our sole use. We are therefore competing with other Local Authorities for in area residential provision with providers reportedly receiving as many as 100+ referrals for any one vacancy. Nationally, 75% of homes are operated by external providers. In Cambridgeshire, this is 100% of residential homes for children in care (excluding residential short breaks homes), meaning that all 24 local in area independent residential homes are subject to competition from other placing

authorities.

- 2.4 Cambridgeshire operates a Dynamic Purchasing System [DPS] contractual arrangement for the sourcing of residential homes. As of April 2023, there are 41 providers delivering residential Children's Home Services, across over 300 homes, providing homes for up to 1285 children, accessible to Cambridgeshire under the DPS As with our in area homes, all of these homes are subject to competition for access from Local Authorities across the country.
- 2.5 Between 1 April 2019, and 31 March 2022, 93 homes for children were made within Residential Children's Homes with only 21 (22.5%) of those within Cambridgeshire, concentrated in and around the Fenland district. This highlights the need for improved sufficiency within Cambridgeshire, and the diversification of provision outside of the Fenland district.
- 2.6 Between April 2019 – October 2022 there was a 34% increase in the number of children living in residential homes. During the same period other externally commissioned homes decreased by 40%, and Cambridgeshire's Children in Care population also reduced by 18%. This demonstrates that whilst Cambridgeshire's Children in Care (and many cohorts within this population) has reduced across previous years, our need for residential children's homes is increasing, contrary to other trends seen. This also suggests that the need for residential homes isn't forecast to change in the immediate future.
- 2.7 In this same period the average weekly cost for Cambridgeshire commissioned residential children's homes has increased significantly.

Residential Children's Home	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Average Cost	£3,965	£3,404	£4,167	£5,769
Average Cost (starting in year)	£4,618	£4,618	£4,330	£7,688

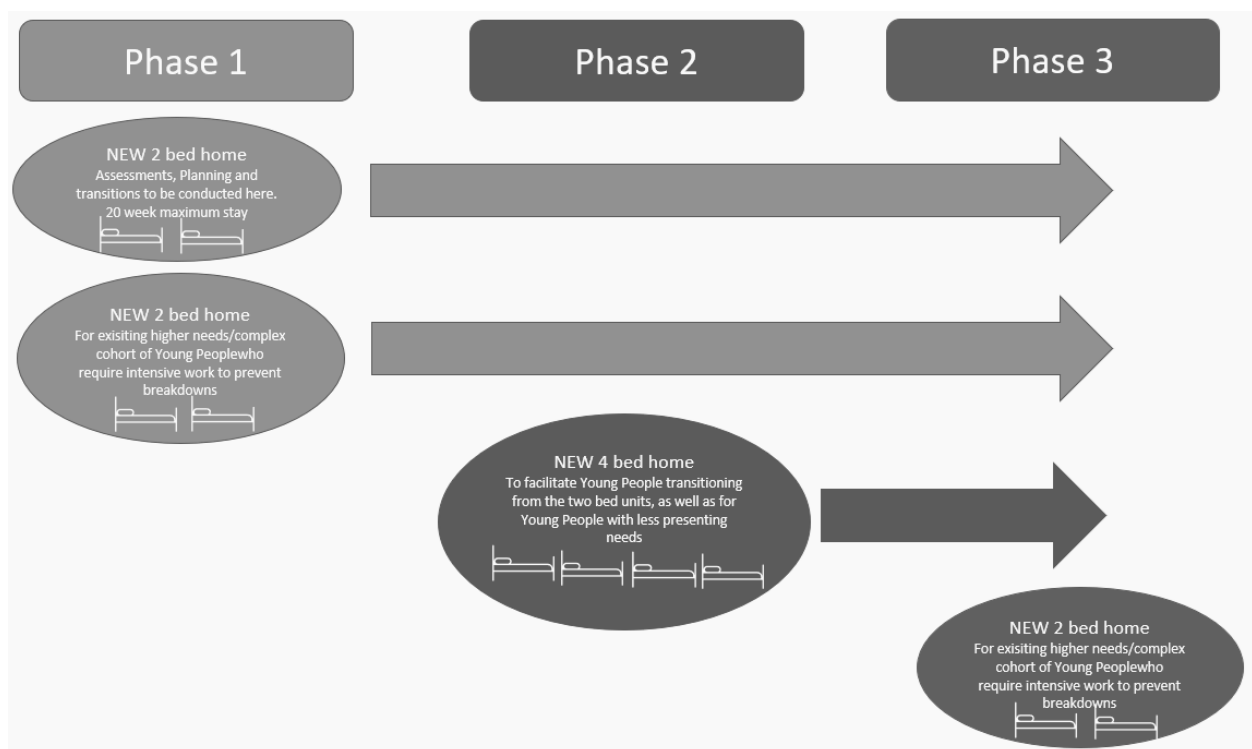
This growing demand for residential provision is in the context of a national sufficiency challenges faced by the residential children's homes sector. Recent national [studies](#), [reviews](#) and [consultations](#) have highlighted that capacity in this sector isn't developing at a rate to meet Local Authority demand.

- 2.8 The Cambridgeshire Residential Services Strategy is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. It provides a detailed analysis of Cambridgeshire's current need for residential services for our children and young people in care, the current market position, and highlights the sufficiency shortfall in this area, locally and nationally.
- 2.9 The Residential Services Strategy has been developed to respond to the need for increased capacity in our local area to meet the needs of some of our most complex children and young people in care now, and in the future. The research and analysis undertaken in developing the draft strategy upholds the view that the sufficiency challenges we are facing are not expected to reduce or go away.

2.10 The outcomes associated with the draft Residential Services Strategy are detailed below:

- To improve outcomes for children and young people in care.
- To increase sufficiency within County for this identified group of children and young people.
- To ensure Cambridgeshire is meeting its statutory responsibilities under the Sufficiency Duty
- Ensure Cambridgeshire's children in care remain in their local area accessing local services, where it is safe and appropriate to do so.
- To reduce the use of unregistered services for young people.
- To provide access to good quality, local services for the primary use of Cambridgeshire's children in care.
- To enhance partnership working internally and across our statutory service partners, the voluntary and community sector, and independent agencies.
- To ensure value for money and quality local homes

2.11 The Residential Services Strategy recommends investment in developing Cambridgeshire's residential children's homes services via a phased approach; this proposal ultimately will provide local capacity for Cambridgeshire children. This approach will continue require the sourcing of residential homes via the external market, but will enhance Cambridgeshire's access to good quality, local residential homes.



3 Conclusion

3.1 Endorsing this Residential Services Strategy will be the foundation upon which we can enhance Cambridgeshire's access to good quality local provisions, the demand for which is not going to reduce. Ultimately, this investment will support the Authority to improve outcomes for our children and young people in care.

- 3.2 The Local Authority's investment in this strategy, and the recommendations therein, will give greater options for homes for Cambridgeshire's children, avoiding where possible the use of unregistered provision.
- 3.3 It is critical that this isn't viewed as a standalone strategy – a systems approach to increasing capacity and sufficiency is already underway across Children's Services. This includes the Safety Valve programme, the Transformation Workstreams, and the Authority's strategic priority to increase the availability of in-house fostering homes. These systems will need to operate in harmony, whilst ensuring that scrutiny of work-area specific objectives is maintained and that progress individually and system wide is evidenced.
- 3.4 Subject to the endorsement of the Residential Services Strategy, a comprehensive options appraisal, market testing, and coproduction with services users is required to assess the means by which Cambridgeshire can deliver this model and meet the needs of our children and young people in care, whilst delivering good quality, cost efficient services locally. It is anticipated that these options would be available for the Committee's consideration in October 2023.

4. Alignment with ambitions

- 4.1 Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2045, and our communities and natural environment are supported to adapt and thrive as the climate changes

There are no significant implications for this ambition

- 4.2 Travel across the county is safer and more environmentally sustainable

There are no significant implications for this ambition.

- 4.3 Health inequalities are reduced

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- The service will provide care and support for children and young people with complex needs and vulnerabilities.
- The service will bring together existing health, education and social care provision to provide well organised and timely support for children with complex needs, reducing the demand and duplication of existing services and ensuring children and young people have cohesive care planning and support across the system.
- The service will be well connected to local health services, providing a mutual upskilling of workforce across the health and social care system and reducing demand on respective services.

- 4.4 People enjoy healthy, safe, and independent lives through timely support that is most suited to their needs

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- The service will provide care and support for children and young people with complex needs and vulnerabilities.
- The service will bring together existing health, education and social care provision to provide well organised and timely support for children with complex needs, reducing the demand and duplication of existing services and ensuring children and young people have cohesive care planning and support across the system.
- The service will be well connected to local health services, providing a mutual upskilling of workforce across the health and social care system and reducing demand on respective services.

4.5 Helping people out of poverty and income inequality

There are no significant implications for this ambition.

4.6 Places and communities prosper because they have a resilient and inclusive economy, access to good quality public services and social justice is prioritised

There are no significant implications for this ambition.

4.7 Children and young people have opportunities to thrive

The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:

- Children are best able to thrive if they are able to live in stable and loving homes, in residential care settings if remaining at home or living in a family-based environment is not in their best long-term interests.

5. Significant Implications

5.1 Resource Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- This report is not primarily about finance, but actions that we take to increase the sufficiency of good quality, local residential children's homes do have a positive financial benefit.
- Subject to endorsement of the Strategy, a comprehensive cost benefit analysis will be undertaken to fully assess the resource implications of the activities outlined in this strategy.
- The proposal will consider the current medium term financial plan (MTFP) and capital programme.

5.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.
Any subsequent procurement will be conducted in compliance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules

5.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- The proposal is an enhancement the Councils requirements under the Children Act 1989 to provide sufficiency of provision to enable children and young people to be accommodated in their local area.
- There are some inevitable risks in commissioning services, however these can be mitigated through contract management, quality assurance processes and the leadership and management infrastructure of the successful provider.

5.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- The model provides an equitable offer of services to children and young people across Cambridgeshire, providing care and support across the county that enables children and young people with varying complexity of needs in a variety of diverse families, to access the care and support that they need both when things are not working well.

5.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

5.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

There are no significant implications within this category.

5.7 Public Health Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

5.8 Climate Change and Environment Implications on Priority Areas:

5.8.1 Implication 1: Energy efficient, low carbon buildings.

Neutral

Explanation: All the energy efficiency opportunities will be considered within latter stages of the project (subject to endorsement of the Strategy by this Committee). This will be undertaken in partnership with the Climate Change & Energy Service, to ensure that the purchase / development of any property is in accordance with Cambridgeshire's strategic imperative to support energy efficient solutions

5.8.2 Implication 2: Low carbon transport.

Neutral

Explanation: There are no significant implications within this category

5.8.3 Implication 3: Green spaces, peatland, afforestation, habitats and land management.

Neutral

Explanation: There are no significant implications within this category

5.8.4 Implication 4: Waste Management and Tackling Plastic Pollution.

Neutral

Explanation: There are no significant implications within this category

5.8.5 Implication 5: Water use, availability and management:

Neutral

Explanation: There are no significant implications within this category

5.8.6 Implication 6: Air Pollution.

Neutral

Explanation: There are no significant implications within this category

5.8.7 Implication 7: Resilience of our services and infrastructure, and supporting vulnerable people to cope with climate change.

Neutral

Explanation: There are no significant implications within this category

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance? Yes

Name of Financial Officer: Martin Wade

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the Head of Procurement and Commercial? Yes

Name of Officer: Clare Ellis

Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or Pathfinder Legal? Yes

Name of Legal Officer: Emma Duncan

Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your EqIA Super User?

Yes

Name of Officer: Josette Kennington

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?

Yes

Name of Officer: Sarah Silk

Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact? Yes

Name of Officer: Will Patten

Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health?

Yes

Name of Officer: Kate Parker

If a Key decision, have any Climate Change and Environment implications been cleared by the Climate Change Officer?

Yes

Name of Officer: Emily Bolton

6. Source documents

6.1 Source documents

- [Cambridgeshire's Sufficiency Statement for Children in Care](#)
- [National Children's Market Study final report](#)
- [Independent review on Children's Social Care](#)
- [National consultation - Stable homes built on love](#)