

CAMBRIDGESHIRE'S SUFFICIENCY STATEMENT FOR 2014-2016

To: **Cabinet**

Date: **15th April 2014**

From: **Executive Director: Children, Families and Adults**

Electoral division(s): **All**

Forward Plan ref: **N/a**

Key decision: **No**

Purpose: **To raise awareness of the actions being taken to ensure that the Council has sufficient accommodation for children and young people in our care and complies with the statutory duty to produce a Sufficiency Strategy.**

Recommendation: **Cabinet supports the approach being taken to ensure the sufficiency of accommodation for children in the care of the County Council and approves the attached Sufficiency Statement.**

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The 1989 Children Act (Section 22G) placed a requirement on Local Authorities to take strategic action to address the placement needs of Looked after Children. Further statutory guidance in 2010 placed responsibility on Local Authorities to identify needs and gaps in the provision of accommodation for children in their care. In Cambridgeshire, the Placement Strategy has directed this work since 2010. However, to ensure that we are fully compliant with legalisation, and to make in-county provision a priority, we have now created a single document that sets out in detail, full consideration of our sufficiency duty and allows focus on the key issues for development of provision.
- 1.2 The Sufficiency Statement (attached at Appendix 1) sets out the Council's strategic response to ensuring that there is sufficient accommodation for the children in our care. It outlines our core principles:
- Care is high quality
 - It is as close to the child or young person's home as possible
 - It is available when needed and is cost effective
 - Children and young people who we care for have as little disruption to their education
 - Full time high quality educational provision is accessible and available to support them in developing their potential.
- 1.3 There are 508 children and young people in the Council's care as of 28th March 2014. It is established practice that we seek to place children and young people in county. However, when there is no such provision available to meet children's needs we have to place children with carers out of county.
- 1.4 A recent benchmarking exercise identified that we have fewer children and young people placed with Council run / managed provision and more placed out of county than both our statistical neighbours and our neighbouring authorities. We must reverse this trend and the Sufficiency Statement sets out how we want to develop care within Cambridgeshire so that as many of the children and young people we care for are placed in county. The Statement includes proposals for:
- Foster care
 - Residential care
 - Supported lodgings to be able to offer young people a range of options when they turn 16
 - Staying Put provision for care leavers
 - Long term placements for children entering care over the age of 10
 - Provision in-county for disabled children
 - Establishing provision for young people with complex disabilities returning from out county (52 week) schools back to in-county. This combines housing, care and educational needs and will see the county working collaboratively with the independent sector
 - Reducing the number of emergency referrals and ensuring the majority of requests are for planned placement moves

- Responding to the anticipated increase in the population in Cambridgeshire over the coming years.
- 1.5 The Sufficiency Statement will be reviewed on a six monthly basis and updated to reflect any changes. It will be published and available on the Council web pages.

2. MAIN ISSUES

- 2.1 A ready supply of in-county provision for looked after children needs to be available so that needs are met within Cambridgeshire. The reasons for wanting our looked after children to remain within the county where possible are:
- It maintains contact with family and friends
 - It supports the development of pastimes, activities and to participate in a range of sport and leisure activities in the local community
 - Placements out of county may place children and young people at an increased risk of running away and a target for sexual exploitation
 - It keeps consistency by enabling continued attendance at the child or young people educational setting e.g. early years setting, school or college. This reduces the impact on attainment and attendance
 - That living locally supports more regular contact with the child's social worker. Contact is more likely to be face-to-face when placements are in-county
 - It supports the participation of children and young people in the development of their service as they are able to attend events and sessions in county
 - That more frequent contact with local providers enhances monitoring and supports safeguarding
 - That for those LAC placed out of county we have to negotiate with regional colleagues regarding health provision which can bring additional delay
 - It avoids communication breakdowns between placing authorities and host authorities.

It should be noted that for some children and young people, an out of county placement is appropriate. Ultimately, we need to seek to ensure that children are not placed out of county simply because suitable in county provision is not available.

- 2.2 The Sufficiency Statement will help us to provide for more looked after children in county. Actions already being taken include:
- Working with independent fostering agencies (IFAs) to increase the provision in county
 - A focus on trying to reduce breakdowns of all placements by holding planning meetings to support placements when they are at risk of breakdown
 - Being proactive in planning for young people placed out of county to come back into county

- Working with new supported accommodation providers setting up provision in Cambridgeshire. One provision is already open with three more opening in the coming few months. This should mean we have enough intensive support provision for 16 and 17 year olds in county. We currently have 256 places available in housing benefit sustainable supported accommodation, including YMCA and foyer accommodation across the county

3. ALIGNMENT WITH PRIORITIES AND WAYS OF WORKING

3.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

- 3.1.1 The Sufficiency Statement has a priority to keep children in county. This means businesses within Cambridgeshire will need to develop. This will not only benefit the children but also increase job opportunities and access to work.

3.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives

- 3.2.1 The aim is for children to be as local to home as possible so their families, friends and Cambridgeshire professionals can support them into independence as they move into adulthood.

3.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people

- 3.3.1 The Sufficiency Statement focuses on providing the best outcome for vulnerable children, who are not able to remain living with their families. The actions within the Statement will support the provision of safe and secure care when and where it is required.

3.4 Ways of working

- 3.4.1 The actions and aims within the Statement support working at a local level, in communities and for communities.

4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Resource and Performance Implications

- 4.1.1 The Sufficiency Statement will deliver high quality care for children and young people as cost effectively as can be achieved. The success of the actions will directly impact on and support budget savings.

4.2 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications

- 4.2.1 The Sufficiency Statement ensures the Council delivers on its statutory duties in relation to sufficient supports services undertaking statutory duties for children in our care as they are more likely to be living within Cambridgeshire

4.3 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 4.3.1 The actions in the Sufficiency Statement will support the development of accommodation within a family for children and young people with additional complex needs.

4.4 Engagement and Consultation Implications

- 4.4.1 Young people's views have been included in the Sufficiency Statement and a wide range of partners and stakeholders have been consulted as part of the creation of this document. Further work is needed with our health colleagues, particularly Children Adolescent Mental Health Services, to develop further provision and joint working to meet the needs of some of our most vulnerable children and young people.

4.5 Public Health Implications

- 4.5.1 The aim to keep children in county should diminish the situations where health input, especially support mental health, is slow to respond.

Source Documents	Location
None	