

**PLACEMENT SUFFICIENCY FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN, INCLUDING THE HUB
(NO WRONG DOOR) DELIVERY**

To: **Children and Young People's Committee**

Meeting Date: **14 November 2017**

From: **Wendi Ogle-Welbourn, Executive Director People and Communities.**

Electoral division(s): **All**

Forward Plan ref: **n/a** *Key decision:* **No**

Purpose: **The report provides details of the Council's Sufficiency Strategy for provision of services for looked after children and care leavers, including delivery of The Hub (No Wrong Door) model in Cambridgeshire.**

Recommendation: **It is recommended that the Committee consider and approve the Sufficiency Strategy and note progress towards implementation of The Hub**

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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 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”.
- 1.3 The previous sufficiency strategy was agreed in July 2016 and was linked to the Building Family Resilience Looked After Children Strategy 2015 – 2021 which was published in March 2016. This latter document outlined a target looked after children population of 453 by 2021. This was an overall reduction of 26.3%, from the actual looked after children population of 615 at the time of publication in March 2016. As reported to Members in Summer 2016 and March 2017, the target was reviewed in the context of a growing population of children in Cambridgeshire and concerns the target was not deliverable. It has been necessary therefore to review the Sufficiency Strategy to ensure it accurately describes the requirements and direction of travel for looked after children.
- 1.4 Cambridgeshire’s Commissioning intentions are governed by the Joint Commissioning Board; a partnership body across Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council. This Board is responsible for ensuring Commissioning activity is undertaken in line with budgetary and strategic priorities.
- 1.5 One key element of ensuring sufficiency for looked after children is the development of intensive intervention based on North Yorkshire’s ‘No Wrong Door’ model to improve outcomes for children on the edge of care, looked after and care leavers. The model of delivery which is called The Hub in Cambridgeshire provides young people who are experiencing family breakdown, those looked after, and those leaving care with flexible accommodation and support from a single multi-agency team. The team comprises residential staff, outreach workers, clinical staff, speech and language therapists, police officers and support from drug and alcohol services, youth offending services, supported accommodation provision and housing providers. The Hub works intensively with families to prevent admission to care in emergencies, or to ensure a quick return home for those children where a break from the family has been necessary. The consistent wrap-around support for young people with complex needs avoids the use of costly external residential provision that does not always meet need. The hub model will also be used to prevent placement breakdowns by providing outreach support for young people and their foster carers

- 1.6 The Hub has received Transformation Funding for start-up costs and delivery costs for the first two years. After this, costs attached to the model will be offset by reductions in the number of looked after children and savings in providing often high cost placements.

2. MAIN ISSUES

Sufficiency Strategy

- 2.1 The strategy (Appendix 1) clearly references the overarching children's services priorities as follows:

- Ensuring the Right Families access the Right Services at the Right time.
- Delivering high quality effective assessments and interventions with children, young people & families
- Creating permanency for our children through effective planning and high quality provision.
- Closing the wellbeing and achievement gaps for our vulnerable groups
- Ensuring we as a workforce are effective, well trained, robustly managed and operate displaying respect and dignity.

In respect of looked after children and those on the edge of becoming looked after Cambridgeshire's priority is to enable children and young people to remain in or return to their family home wherever this is possible and safe to do. When this is not possible, Cambridgeshire is dedicated to providing good quality placements for our looked after children; we aim to provide children with permanent placements (either through adoption, special guardianship orders, or placements with family and friends). We are developing our services to ensure that we work with families wherever possible to make positive and sustained change to prevent children entering the care system.

- 2.2 Feedback from children and young people about the current accommodation and placement offer has presented the following themes:

- **Feeling safe and supported.** Young people spoke about the importance of feeling safe and supported in placements; including helping with support for mental health, and the effect of emergency placements resulting in feeling unsafe. Young people identified feeling supported by a range of people including support staff, carers, family, social workers and the participation team.
- **Communication.** Young people spoke about the importance of communication; both professionals and support staff being honest and open with young people, and the need for young people to be involved and consulted. Residents meetings, speaking to young people individually and feedback processes that are easily accessible are some of the examples young people presented when discussing the importance of communication.
- **Location.** A common theme in young people's feedback was the location of their placements, including liking placements because of the location proximity to their communities, disliking placements because of distance from school and the restrictions this can have on ability to take part in after school clubs, and the benefits of living in an area with good travel links.

- **Internet access & Wi-Fi.** A frequent response identifying what could be better or is missing, particularly from older young people and those living in supported accommodation provisions was access to the internet / Wi-Fi.

2.3 The sufficiency strategy provides helpful detail and analysis of the wider Cambridgeshire population, detail of demographics and trends in the looked after population, services which support looked after children and information about the placement market and costs. Five emerging themes and trends have been identified as follows:

2.3.1 **Residential Placements:** Whilst Cambridgeshire's use of Residential placements is lower than national averages, usage has increased over recent years. This is in part because of a lack of suitable fostering provisions (particularly emergency fostering placements), rather than being the plan for a young person. There is evidence from other authorities that the lack of fostering capacity particularly in emergencies is a national trend and not a challenge solely faced by Cambridgeshire. Other Local Authorities have explored more creative approaches to commissioning children's residential provisions, including the Thames Valley cross regional model, and the North Yorkshire No Wrong Door model.

2.3.2 **Lack of capacity and resilient placements:** Lack of capacity is a trend across all placement types, however particular focus is given to the need for fostering placements for sibling groups, emergency placements and placements for older young people aged 13+ (particularly those young people with complex needs and involvement with the youth offending service). Lack of capacity within the fostering sector has impacted on other provisions of accommodation for looked after children; residential provisions are used where fostering placements are required (particularly in emergencies) and are unavailable, and in turn the residential sector has also struggled to meet demand.

41% of young people experiencing 3 or more placement moves are aged 16 or 17. This trend is associated with some young people 'moving around' supported accommodation and housing benefit sustainable provisions. Cambridgeshire has a particular need to commission a range of resilient placement options for young people aged 16+. Similarly Cambridgeshire has a need to develop a prevention service to prevent young people from coming into care, and to link with colleagues in Housing teams across the districts to develop housing options. The Hub model discussed above will help to address this need

2.3.3 **Children in other local authorities:** 47% of Cambridgeshire looked after children are placed in out of county placements, although most are placed in neighbouring authorities. Some out of county placements present particular challenges in ensuring positive outcomes for looked after children, including access to health services, continuing links to local community, and maintaining education provisions. The commitment to developing the in house fostering and supported lodgings offer is expected to enable more children and young people to be placed within Cambridgeshire.

There are 19 children's homes within Cambridgeshire (18 of which are independent of the Council and operated by external providers), including 3

registered homes providing short breaks and shared care for disabled children and young people. 58% of these homes are in the Fenland district; this has impacted on local services in the area (including local schools and increased pressure on police services) and led to areas of increased risk of exploitation due to the concentrated number of homes. There is a clear need to develop provision across the county, not in the Fenland area.

2.3.4 Complex needs and challenging behaviour: Needs and behaviours such as youth offending, mental health needs and risk of exploitation represent components of the more challenging behaviours attributed to some young people among the population of Cambridgeshire's looked after young people. This in-turn has contributed to the increase in placement breakdowns and increased proportion of emergency placements. It is anticipated that the introduction of The Hub (based on the No Wrong Door model) will effect a reduction in the number of arrests made by police, and the number of charges, and in turn will positively impact on the criminalisation of looked after young people and the involvement of the youth offending service.

2.3.5 Children with Disabilities: It is an emerging trend that Cambridgeshire's current short break and shared care and education offer is not yet fully effective at meeting the increased population of children and young people with complex & challenging behaviour and mental health needs. This has resulted in a continuing use of out of county residential special schools.

Currently there are 49 Cambridgeshire young people accessing short breaks via Family Link Carers (foster carers providing respite services for children and young people with a disability). Children and young people who are being referred for these services have more complex needs including children who need a high level of physical care and there is a need for some carers to have adaptations to their home to manage their care. A fuller analysis of the children's need and age group is being undertaken to inform future recruitment needs and planning.

2.4 The strategy outlines four priorities to enable the challenges identified to be met. These priorities will inform and link with service plans and commissioning intentions across the People and Communities Directorate:

1. Deliver high quality, effective assessments and purposeful interventions with children, young people and families
2. Increased development of the in house fostering service
3. Placement stability and range of high quality placement provision
4. Ensure looked after children and young people have access to the right health resources, including additional support where a need is identified

The Hub

2.5 The model of service (Appendix 2) draws on multi-agency professionals supporting young people in a range of settings, including their own home, foster care, supported accommodation and the hub children's home. The model has ten key distinguishers which underpin the offer to children and young people:

- always progressing to permanence within a family or community
- high stickability of the key worker

- fewer referrals, less stigma
- robust training strategy same/or similar to restorative practice and therapeutic support
- no heads on beds culture
- no appointment assessments
- a core offer to all young people
- multi-agency, intelligence-led approach to reduce risk
- close partnership working
- young people's aspirations drive practice

2.6 In Cambridgeshire the Hub will consist of:

- Six bed children's home based at Victoria Road Wisbech
- Hub Foster placements and supported lodgings (available from Autumn 2017)
- Embedded police officers
- Communication worker (Speech and Language Therapist)
- Clinician
- Residential hub workers
- Outreach workers and leads for education employment and training, accommodation, risk support, placement support, housing pathways

All staff including those in support- roles receive core training in motivational interviewing, restorative practice, solution focussed practice, signs of safety planning.

2.7 The Hub will go live on 2 October 2017 with the children's home provision, outreach service, embedded police officer and clinical consultation from the current clinical psychology lead. Recruitment is underway for the communications officer and clinician and they are likely to be in post by the new year. Work is underway to recruit attached foster carers and supported lodgings carers and it is currently being scoped whether existing carers want to move to the Hub or whether new recruitment is needed. A programme of training and staff development is underway and will continue through the Autumn.

2.8 Key performance indicators are in place for the Hub to measure outcomes for young people. Financial monitoring systems will track savings and cost avoidance in order to measure the success of the model. Discussion is also taking place with Cambridge University about research-based evaluation of the models implementation in Cambridgeshire.

3. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

3.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

There are no significant implications for this priority

3.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives

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

- Providing a sufficient range of placements for children and young people has a significant impact on their health outcomes, including emotional well-being, and;

- The Hub will improve health outcomes for children and young people with a specific aim of providing improved outcomes in respect of self-harm, emotional well-being, substance misuse

3.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people

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

- Looked after children and care leavers are one of the most vulnerable groups of children and research indicates they are more likely than the general population to experience adversity into adult life.
- Providing good quality placements and permanence for children gives them the best opportunities for positive outcomes into adulthood

4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Resource Implications

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

- The Strategy outlines the Council's priorities for commissioning and service development to ensure services are provided within the current allocated resources
- The Hub delivery model has received £890k transformation funding over 2017-18 and 18-19 financial years in the context of making savings of £1508k over the current and next three financial years

4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

There are no significant implications in this area

4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

The following bullet point sets out details of significant implications identified by officers

- The sufficiency strategy meets the council's statutory duty in this area

4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no significant implications in this area

4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

There are no significant implications in this area.

4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

There are no significant implications in this area.

4.7 Public Health Implications

There are no significant implications in this area

Implications	Officer Clearance
Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?	Yes or No Name of Financial Officer:
Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by Finance?	Yes or No Name of Financial Officer:
Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by LGSS Law?	Yes or No Name of Legal Officer:
Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?	Yes or No Name of Officer:
Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?	Yes or No Name of Officer:
Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact?	Yes or No Name of Officer:
Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health	Yes or No Name of Officer:

Please include the table at the end of your report so that the Chief Executive/Executive Directors/Directors clearing the reports and the public are aware that you have cleared each implication with the relevant Team.

SOURCE DOCUMENTS

Source Documents	Location
None	

