

Committee(s)	Dated:
Safeguarding Sub Committee	3 October 2019
Subject: City of London Sufficiency Strategy	Public
Report of: Director of Community and Children's Services	For information
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Summary

This report presents the City of London Corporation Sufficiency Strategy for information to the Safeguarding Sub Committee. The Strategy sets out options for services and support for children in care and care leavers. It concludes that the City Corporation must continue to work flexibly to get the best outcomes for the diverse group of children and young people in its care. The approach advocated seeks to respond to the unique circumstances in the City of London, notably the small number of children in care and the predominance of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- note the Sufficiency Strategy.

Main Report

1. All local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that there are enough placements within their geographical area to meet the needs of children and young people in care and care leavers. Due to the comparatively low number of children in care in the City of London it has not been considered feasible to provide an in-house fostering service, and there are currently no foster carers within the City of London. A distinctive approach is needed to reflect this.

Legal Background

2. Since the implementation of the Children Act 1989, local authorities have been required to take steps that secure, so far as is reasonable and practicable, sufficient accommodation for children in care within their local authority area.
3. The Statutory Guidance on *Securing sufficient accommodation for looked after children* (2010) sets out best practice, which includes the following requirements:

- That all children are placed in appropriate placements with access to the support services they require in their local authority area, except where this is not consistent with their welfare;
- That the full range of universal, targeted and specialist services work together to meet children's needs in an integrated way in the local area, including children who are already looked after, as well as those at risk of care or custody;
- Where it is not reasonable or practical for a child to be placed within her/his local authority area, there are mechanisms in place to widen the range of provision in neighbouring areas, or a region which is still within an accessible distance, while still being able to provide the full range of services to meet identified needs;
- That partners, including housing, work together to secure a range of provision to meet the needs of those who become looked after at the age of 16 and 17 years, and support the continuity of accommodation beyond the age of 18 years;
- In addition to meeting relevant national minimum standards, services are of high quality to secure the specific outcomes identified in the care plans of children looked after.

City of London Corporation background

4. The City of London Corporation is committed to the highest quality practice in the placement and provision for its Children in Care and Care Leavers.
5. The City Corporation has one generic children's team which provides a full range of services including permanence, early help, and support for children with disabilities, children in need, child protection, children in care and care leavers.
6. The number of City of London resident children who have become children in care is very low in comparison to other local authorities. Most children who are looked after by the City Corporation are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). The size of the children's team, the low numbers of children in care and the predominance of UASC determines the distinct approach to placements that we take in the City Corporation. This brings its own unique challenges for the Corporation in terms of finding suitable placements that meet the diverse cultural needs of our children in care.
7. At 31 March 2019, the City Corporation was caring for 20 children and young people of which 29 were UASC males aged 15 plus. Of the 20 living in care 13 were in foster care placements, 6 were living in semi-independent residential accommodation with 24/7 support 1 in children's homes
8. At March 2019, 21 young people were engaged with the City Corporation's Care Leaver service of which 20 were former UASC. This is more than double the number for June 2018. 1 were in semi-independent living projects; 1 were in 'staying put' arrangements and 19 were independently living in local authority tenancies

Our approach

9. There is a wide ethnic diversity in the children in care and care leaver populations. Our approach is to meet the diverse needs of our children and young people, ensuring that they have the support of foster carers who know and understand their needs and journey. We seek to achieve this by securing the best match for the young person in their placement through reviewing and assessing a range of carers with similar backgrounds to the young people.
10. The Department's commissioning team sets up individual contractual arrangements with the Independent Fostering Agencies for foster placements, so there is consistency in the quality of placements, and we get best value. This approach supports placement stability and the learning and development of our young people. Our commissioning approach also seeks to secure foster carers who are prepared to enter into "staying put" arrangements to provide on-going support and stability for those leaving care.
11. The majority of accommodation used for those who are transitioning to leave care delivers some support to our young people and reflects their needs on transitioning to independence. The City Corporation anticipates that children and young people who are unaccompanied asylum seekers will continue to be the significant majority of those for whom we provide care. As such our future need will continue to require a high proportion of accommodation options that provide support.
12. The Sufficiency Strategy sets out options for children in care and care leavers, given the wide ethnic diversity of both cohorts no approach is preferred, and each placement is determined on a case by case basis. Our options are reviewed on a regular basis to take account of new developments, risks and opportunities. The City Corporation recognises that it may need to use more than one approach in the future, and to work flexibly to get the best outcomes for children and young people and to minimise the risks of relying on one option exclusively.
13. The Sufficiency Strategy for children in care and care leavers sets out the City Corporation's intentions in providing fostering services for children in care, which meets their needs in relation to quality and diversity. The uniqueness of the demography in the City of London is not currently conducive in meeting these needs and therefore the City Corporation commissions independent fostering agencies through a Pan London agreement and uses an approved list of several providers for children in care over 16, care leavers and UASC but also aims to place them in City of London estates when appropriate.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

14. The Department of Community and Children's Services Business Plan 2019-20 has the following priorities which the Sufficiency Strategy supports:
 - Safe - People of all ages live in safe communities, our homes are safe and well maintained and our estates are protected from harm.

- Potential - People of all ages are prepared to flourish in a rapidly changing world through exceptional education, cultural and creative learning, and skills which link to the world of work.
 - Independence, Involvement and Choice - People of all ages can live independently, play a role in their communities and exercise choice over their services.
 - Health and Wellbeing - People of all ages enjoy good mental and physical health and wellbeing.
 - Community - People of all ages feel part of, engaged with and able to shape their community.
15. This Sufficiency Strategy reflects and will support the delivery of the vision and priorities set out in our *Children and Young People's Plan 2018-21* (CYPP). The vision is 'to be the best place possible for children and young people to grow up'. We will work in partnership to provide a safe, inclusive and supportive environment where all our children and young people, regardless of background and circumstance, feel they belong. We will provide high quality services, world-class education and excellent opportunities that enable them to live healthily, develop resilience, access meaningful employment, achieve their potential and thrive'.
16. The Sufficiency Strategy reflects the following outcomes in the Corporate Plan 2018-2023:
- **Outcome 1:** People are safe and feel safe.
 - **Outcome 2:** People enjoy good health and wellbeing.
 - **Outcome 3:** People have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and reach their full potential.
 - **Outcome 4:** Communities are cohesive and have the facilities they need.

Financial Implications

17. The financial implications are as set out in the report.

Legal Implications

18. The *Children and Social Work Act 2017* introduced Corporate Parenting Principles to ensure all staff and departments in local authorities consider the impact of their work on those children and young people for whom the local authority is the corporate parent, as well as for care leavers up to the age of 25. There is a focus on encouraging children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings and taking these into account, ensuring they have stability and preparing them for adulthood and independent living. The Act also

requires each local authority to consult on and publish a local offer for its care leavers.

Equalities Implications

19. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out and is currently being finalised. It concluded that the Sufficiency Strategy will have a positive impact on children in care and care leavers.

Conclusion

20. The proposed Sufficiency Strategy would enhance the City Corporation's efforts to commit to the highest quality practice in the placement and provision for Children in Care, Care Leavers and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.

Appendices

- Appendix A – Sufficiency Strategy for Children in Care and Care Leavers in the City of London

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