

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
<b>Safeguarding Sub Committee</b>	27/09/21
<b>Subject:</b> Update to the Children's Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy 2021-2023.	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	<b>Contribute to a flourishing society</b> 1. People are safe and feel safe. 2. People enjoy good health and wellbeing. 3. People have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and reach their full potential. 4. Communities are cohesive and have the facilities they need.
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>If so, how much?</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	<b>No additional funding</b>
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
<b>Report of: Andrew Carter</b>	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Report author: Ian Jarman</b>	

### Summary

This report is to introduce the updated Children's Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Children in Care and Care Leavers in the City of London 2021-2023.

### Recommendation(s)

To accept the updated Children's Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Children in Care and Care Leavers in the City of London 2021-2023.

### Main Report

#### Background

The City of London Corporation's (City Corporation,) Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Children in Care and Care Leavers draws together the findings from research into the needs of children and young people in care. The aim is to support children to remain safely within their families wherever possible and where needed provide effective services that promote a journey to independence.

The City will continue to provide preventative services through Early Help to prevent children and young people coming into care. This supports the City Corporation in maintaining low numbers of City of London children coming into care.

The Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy has been updated to take into account, new demands, the need to reduce costs, new commissioning arrangements through a Dynamic Purchasing Framework, a new local approach for supported accommodation and broader options when moving onto independent accommodation for young People in Care and leaving Care.

### **Current Position**

Children's Services provide support and care for the City's Children in Care. Due to the low number of Children in Care in the City, services have historically been arranged via a spot purchase model, particularly when meeting the increased number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC), the largest area of growth in demand for the City.

As part of the update to the Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy, it has been identified that the spot purchase model does not provide any economies of scale, making it difficult to negotiate price reductions also requiring high levels of administration. The updated strategy outlines the move from spot purchasing to a Dynamic Purchasing framework to improve value, reduce costs and work collaboratively with Local Authorities to improve outcomes and quality.

The updated strategy also sets out our plans to develop local 'moving on' accommodation options within the City, for Care Leavers, through partnerships with City Housing and the private rented sector.

### **Proposals**

That the updated strategy, action plan and monitoring arrangements are accepted by the Committee.

### **Options**

1. To accept the updated strategy in its current format
2. To accept the updated strategy but with recommended changes
3. To reject the updated strategy.

### **Key Data**

All relevant key data is embedded within the Sufficiency Strategy.

### **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

The proposals within the strategy align with the Corporate Plan - '**Contribute to a Flourishing Society**', by moving toward more localised options for Care Leavers to live and integrate within the local City community.

The City Children and Young People's plan sets out our overarching vision, priorities and activities, which provide the context for this strategy. The proposals within the Sufficiency and Commissioning strategy also align with the updated Children and Young People plan for more effective housing and supported accommodation options within the city (currently undergoing updated development).

### **Financial implications**

The actions outlined in the updated Sufficiency Strategy are intended to ensure better value for money with reduced costs and reduced administration when Commissioning new placements and services through a Dynamic Purchasing Framework.

The proposals outlined in terms of improved and more local accommodation options aims to significantly reduce the use of high cost of supported accommodation and ensure move on accommodation is available sooner, which will reduce costs for those Care Leavers remaining in placements until independent accommodation becomes available.

### **Resource implications**

The City has a single children's team working closely with the City Commissioning Team to deliver services and placements, most of which is outside of the square mile. The use of a Dynamic purchasing system to buy placements brings Local Authorities together to reduce administration, ensure better prices and quality through collaborative purchasing and the resulting economies of scale.

### **Legal implications**

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 looked after within their local authority area or 'the sufficiency duty' (s. 22G, Children Act 1989, as inserted into the Act by s. 9 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008).

The strategy is a requirement for all Children's Services and is underpinned by legislation and statutory guidance including:

- Section 9 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 which places a general duty on local authorities to secure, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within the local authority's area which meets the needs of children that the local authority are looking after, and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation that is in the local authority's area.

Statutory Guidance (DfE 2010) describes the accommodation required for a child looked after that:

- does not disrupt his/her education or training;
- enables the child to live with an accommodated sibling;
- accommodation is within the local authority's area, unless that is not reasonably practicable.

The wider Legal implications are set out in Appendix 1, Page 16 of the strategy.

### **Risk implications**

There are few risks presented by the strategy itself. However, by not improving the Commissioning arrangements, improving the type of provision available locally or not increasing the supply of local moving on accommodation means that quality is unlikely to improve at a satisfactory pace and costs will continue to climb due to out of area placements and the continued use of spot purchasing.

### **Equalities implications**

The Children's Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Children in Care and Care leavers, develops options for those Children who are among the most vulnerable in our Communities. The proposals in the strategy comply with our public Sector Equality Duty 2010, having a positive impact on people protected by existing equality legislation – age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and pregnancy.

### **Climate implications**

Providing more localised services will reduce the impact of travelling to and from out of area provision in terms of Social work, but also in terms of quality checks and reviews.

Having a direct relationship with Landlord providers does offer the opportunity to review properties and installations for environmental impact and work to reduce those wherever possible.

### **Security implications**

The updated Sufficiency strategy does not have any Security Implications.

### **Stakeholder Engagement**

To support the strategy progress, an action plan has been added which has been reviewed by stakeholders, taking feedback from Young People into account. Feedback from Mr. Chris Sands, the City's independent reviewer for Young People services and Chair of the City's Achieving Excellence Board states:

*“The strategy reads well, is comprehensive and succinct. It is good that you have clearly stated you will not use unregulated placements for under 16s. The three main accommodation options (Para 5.9), are entirely appropriate and demonstrate thinking outside what is already available”.*

### **Conclusion**

The sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for children in care and Care Leavers sets out the City Corporation's intentions in providing services for children looked after in the City, which meets their needs in relation to quality and diversity. To ensure that progress against the action plan is measured and supported, regular updates on the action plan delivery will be reported at the following regular Management Group meetings:

- Strategic Placements Group
- Children's Senior Management Team
- Achieving Excellence Board
- Safeguarding Sub Committee – reporting to City Members.

This updated strategy will be reviewed annually, with the next review in April 2022.

### **Report author**

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