

APPENDIX 1

# Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Children in Care in the City of London 2015 to 2017

## About this document

Title	Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Children in Care in the City of London.
Purpose	The Sufficiency Strategy has been produced to set out how Family Operations will meet its duty of sufficiency. This version of the document includes the mid-term review.
Updated by	Pat Dixon
Approved by	
Date	
Version number	1.3
Status	Final
Review frequency	Three-yearly with mid-term review.
Next review date	

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1.** The City of London's Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Children in Care draws together the findings from research into the needs of children and young people in care in the City of London.
- 1.2.** All local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient placements within their geographical area to meet the needs of children and young people in care. The City of London covers only one square mile and there are currently no foster carers within this geographic area. Due to the number of children residing in the City of London, which is currently standing at approximately just under 900 it has not been considered feasible to provide an in-house fostering service.
- 1.3.** The City of London has one generic children's team which provides services from adoption, early help; children with disabilities, children in need, child protection, children looked after and care leavers. The number of City of London resident children who have become looked after is very low, ranging from approximately three to four children at any one time. The majority of children who are looked after in the City are unaccompanied asylum seeking children, on average the number of children looked after at any one time ranges from seven to twelve.
- 1.4.** The Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy analyses the needs of children and young people in care in the City of London and the impact that this data has on our future placement requirements. Exploring the strengths of this strategy and the potential areas for development, to ensure that children and young people feel connected and central to the strategic planning for future services

## **2. Legal Context**

- 2.1** Since the implementation of the Children Act 1989 local authorities have been required to take steps that secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for children looked after within their local authority area (Section 22G Children Act 1989). This section of the 1989 Act was also inserted into Section 9 of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008. This is now referred to as 'the sufficiency duty'.
- 2.2** The Statutory Guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for children looked after provides examples of best practice in securing sufficiency that include the following:
  - 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 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;
- And 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;

**2.3** The Statutory Guidance states that 'Local authorities must be able to show that at a strategic level they are taking steps to meet the sufficiency duty, so far as is 'reasonably practical'.' It further explains what is meant by 'reasonably practical', and it includes the following:

- that it is a general duty that applies to strategic arrangements, rather than to the provision of accommodation to a particular, individual child;
- it does not require local authorities to provide accommodation within their area for every child they look after;
- there may be a significant minority of children for whom it is not 'reasonably practical' to provide a certain type of accommodation within the area;
- in accordance with section 22C (5) of the 1989 Act, the overriding factor is that the placement must be the most appropriate placement available;
- the local authority must give preference to a placement with a friend, relative or other person connected with the child and who is a local authority foster parent [section 22C (7) (a)];

**2.4** The term 'looked after children' as defined in the 1989 Act refers to all children and young people being 'looked after' by the local authority. These may be subject to Care Orders or Interim Care Orders; placed or authorised to be placed, with prospective adopters; voluntarily accommodated including unaccompanied asylum seeking children and LAC Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2014-2017 5 finally those subject to court orders with residence requirements i.e. a secure order or remanded to local authority accommodation.

**2.5** The term 'care leavers' as defined in The Children (Care Leavers) Act 2000 refers to eligible, relevant and former relevant children:

- Eligible children are those young people aged 16 and 17 who are still in care and have been 'looked after' for (a total of) at least 13 weeks from the age of 14 and including their 16th birthday; Relevant children are those young people aged 16 and 17 who have already left care, and who were 'looked after' for (a total of) at least 13 weeks from the age of 14, and have been 'looked after' at some time while they were 16 or 17;
- Former relevant children are those young people aged 18, 19 or 20 who have been eligible and/or relevant.

### 3. Local Context for Children Looked After

- 3.1** The City of London is committed to ensuring that children and young people are able to remain safely within their own families wherever this is consistent with maintaining and promoting their wellbeing. This is supported through a “Think Family” approach, whereby all services involved with the family work together to prevent children coming into care.
- 3.2** We are also improving the range of support services available to children with disabilities and their families, again to ensure that this group of children and young people remain within their families wherever possible. This is achieved through supporting children and families in accessing targeted and early help services, in addition to “short breaks”.

**Fig 1**

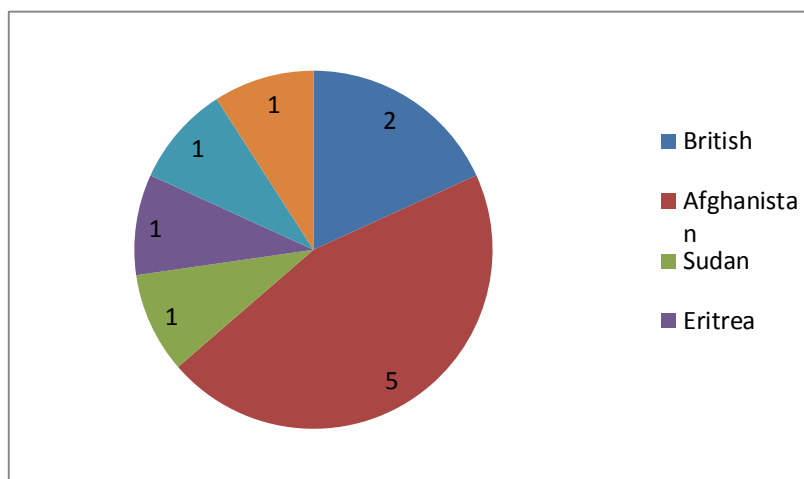
Snapshots @ 31 March	Entity	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Number of Looked After Children @ 31 March	LA	12	14	9	6	7	7	8	11
LAC at 31 March - Rate per 10,000 CYP population (<18yo)	LA	207.00	224.00	133.00	102.00	88.00	84.00	84.00	115.18*
LAC at 31 March - Rate per 10,000 CYP population (<18yo)	SN	59.70	60.40	57.60	56.70	52.50	48.90	48.70	Not yet available
LAC at 31 March - Rate per 10,000 CYP population (<18yo)	England	54.00	57.00	58.00	59.00	60.00	60.00	60.00	Not yet available

*\* 2016 rate per 10,000 currently using the ONS 2014 Mid-Year population projection for < 18 year olds, awaiting the 2015 projection*

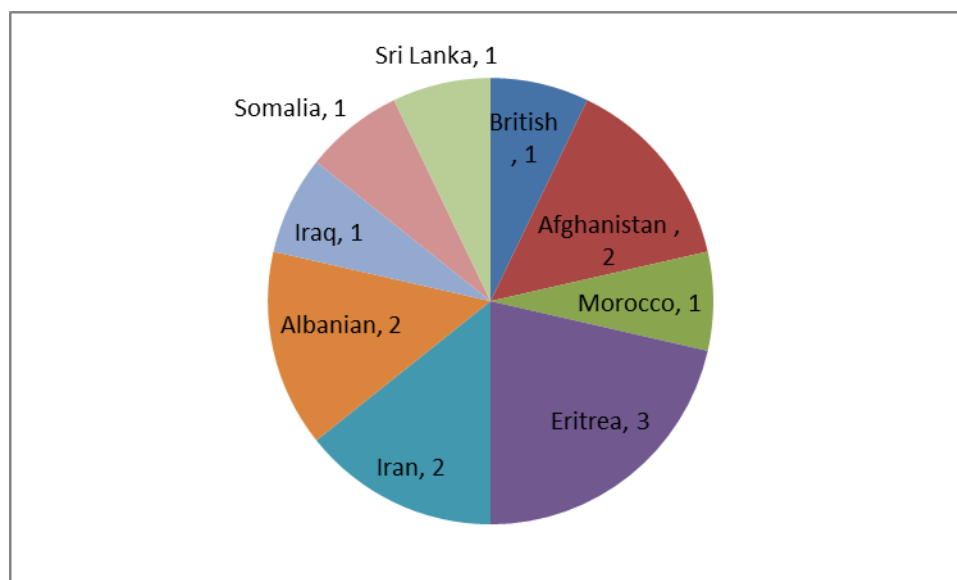
- 3.3** We ensure that only those children and young people for whom care is essential come into care while enabling all others to be supported to remain within their extended families. Where children and young people need to come into care for their own safety and protection, we will seek to ensure that they remain placed as close as possible to their home, community and school, when this is in accordance with their best interests. For young children who are unable to safely return to their birth or extended families, we will seek permanency for them through adoption wherever possible. Adoption is associated with the best outcomes for children unable to remain within their own birth families, where this isn't possible the City has sought to achieve permanency through a Special Guardianship Order.

- 3.4** As can be seen by Fig 1 the number of City resident children who become looked after has always remained low, the majority of the City's children looked after are unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC). This is in contrast to other local authorities, where the majority of the children looked after are residents in the local authority, this brings its own unique challenges in finding suitable placements that meet the diverse cultural needs of the City's children looked after.

**Fig 2 Ethnic diversity of Children Looked After Population April 2016**



**Fig 3 Ethnic diversity of Care Leaver Population April 2016**



- 3.5** Fig 2 and 3 shows the ethnic diversity of the children looked after and care leaver population in the City of London. Integral to this strategy is how we meet the diverse needs of our children and young people, ensuring that they have the support and familiarity of foster carers who know and understand their needs and journey. Key to achieving this is ensuring that we have achieved the best match for the young person in relation to their placement, so that they can feel safe and secure. This is achieved

through reviewing a wide range of carers with similar backgrounds to the young people. Working closely with the commissioning team in setting up individual contractual arrangements with the Independent Fostering Agencies, so there is consistency around the quality of the placements, which achieves best value. This approach supports placement stability and the learning and development of our young people.

## **4 Needs Analysis and Commissioning Intentions**

In terms of the looked after children population data from 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015 shows that;

- 4.1** The age and gender profile of the City's children looked after reflects the dominance of children who are UASC. Among this group seven of the eleven children looked after in 2014/15 were UASC, as were three of the four children who came into care during this year. Nationally, 89% of UASC children are male and 76% are aged over 16 years
- 4.2** 36% of children looked after in 2014/15 in the City of London were from white ethnic backgrounds. This is less than would be expected because 58% of the general population aged 0-19 years old are from white ethnic backgrounds. 18% of the children looked after population are from mixed ethnic backgrounds which are reflective of the 14% of children from mixed ethnic background in the general population. 36% are from Asian ethnic backgrounds. Asian children are over represented in the population of children looked after; only 17% of the general population are Asian. These proportions should however be treated with caution due to the very low numbers involved.
- 4.3** Due to the diverse nature of the City of London's children looked after population it is important that we have a range of carers from varied backgrounds, given the size and demography of the City of London it may prove difficult to meet these needs within the one square mile. As can be seen from Fig 2 the highest proportion of people living in the City are White/ British, with Asian Bangladeshi being the second highest. In relation to care leavers considerable support is offered by City of London Housing, through supported tenancy arrangements in the City and on estates owned by the City of London in other Local Authorities.

### **4.4 Options**

The following options have been considered to support City of London children who are looked after;

#### **Option 1**

This option would be to bring fostering services in-house; with foster carers being recruited and supported by the City of London. The strength of this strategy would be that the City would have more control of the quality of services being offered, training foster carers in the specific needs of the City. It would also enable the recruitment of foster carers from in and around the locality of the City, making it possible for City children and



young people to remain near to their homes; however as previously identified the majority of the City's children are UASC. In-house foster carers would support the children and young people's identity in being connected to the City, and local resources available.

The risk in relation to this strategy would be a smaller pool of foster carers to call upon; this could restrict the City's capacity in meeting the diverse needs of the City of London's children looked after population. As can be seen by the data in fig 4, white British are the highest ethnic group in the City of London at 57.5. When this is seen in relation to the majority of the children looked after in the City, who unaccompanied children seeking asylum, with only a small proportion are being City residents it could prove difficult to meet the diverse needs of our CLA population.

Consideration would also need to be given to the current structure of Children's Social Care in relation to supporting a fostering service. To ensure that the fostering service met National Minimum Standards and the supervisory role for foster carers employed by the City of London. This strategy could have considerable resource implications, due to the infra-structure required to deliver in-house fostering services. There is also the risk that with a smaller selection of carers the City might not be able to meet the diverse needs of our children looked after population.

## **Option 2**

This option would be to have direct contractual arrangements with one or two Independent Fostering Agencies, to provide fostering services for the City. The strengths of this strategy would be similar to those of option 1, in that the City would have more control over the quality and costs of the provision through individually negotiated agreements directly with the providers. Unlike option 1 the City would not be required to increase the infra-structure of Children's Social Care to accommodate the fostering service. The potential risks in relation to this strategy could be the restricted number of foster carers available, and the diversity to meet the needs of the City's children looked after population. Consideration would also need to be given in regard to placement disruption and the potential deterioration of the quality of the IFA when commissioning the service, to ensure that the City can minimise the disruption for young people, whilst retaining good to outstanding services. However this could be resolved through robust contractual and monitoring arrangements being in place, which will quickly identify areas of development, working with the IFA's to resolve any performance issues.

### Option 3

This option is the current option being used by the City of London. The City is part of the Pan London Consortium, which is where Local Authorities in London have come together under one contractual arrangement with IFA's to ensure that there is an agreed standard and cost for placements from IFA's. This does not preclude the need for individual contractual arrangements with the IFA's, but there is a certain assurance as to the quality and consistency as to the services being provided. There is also a wider pool of diverse foster carers to choose from, which enable more choice when finding a placement. The majority of Local Authorities use the Pan London Consortium when they have exhausted their own placements or where they have a child who requires more specialist care which cannot be provided in-house.

The risks in relation to this strategy are that the quality can be variable in regard to the placements. City of London children and young people can also be placed over a wide demographic area when establishing the best match in regard to ethnic and cultural needs, which can be isolating for the young people. There have also been some concerns that the consortium may be disbanded due to the lack of interest/participation from other Local Authorities.

The options identified are being reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that the most suitable model is used to meet the needs of the children looked after and care leavers in the City of London. It may be that the City will use more than one option, this would minimise the potential risks in utilising just one of the options available. The main priority of the City is to ensure that children and young people have the best possible opportunities to reach their full potential. A key factor in achieving this is placement stability and appropriate support and care, therefore the priority of this strategy is to meet needs of children and young people, to do this they will need to be the central focus to any commissioning arrangements

**Fig 4**

City of London Ethnicity Source 2011 census	
White British	57.5
Black African	1.3
Black Caribbean	0.6
Turkish/ Turkish Cypriot	0.2
Asian Indian	2.9
Asian Bangladeshi	3.1
White Irish	2.4
Asian Chinese	3.6
White Polish	0.5

**4.5** The current preferred option for the City's children looked after is to commission Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) through the Pan London consortium, to which the City of London belongs to;

- This ensures that the City has access to a culturally diverse number of foster carers, which match the needs of our children looked after population.
- The City ensures that when children are placed with IFA they are only placed with agencies that have been judged as good or outstanding by Ofsted.
- IFA's are monitored every 6 months by the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service Manager to ensure that agencies are meeting national minimum standards.
- City of London provides additional free training for foster carers caring for City looked after children.
- Children and young people have a high level of support in placement from their social worker and independent reviewing officer.

This strategy has led to placement stability for City of London children and young people, many of whom often take up the opportunity to "stay put" in placement post 18 years

## **5 Reviewing this Strategy**

- 5.1** This strategy sets out our commissioning intentions to ensure that we have sufficient placements to meet the needs of children and young people in care within the City of London.
- 5.2** Central to this strategy is children and young people and the support that they need to thrive and develop to reach their full potential. To achieve this consideration will need to be given to their health, education, and emotional wellbeing when reviewing how we meet their placement needs.
- 5.3** Part of the review of this strategy is for children and young people to have their views taken into consideration; this can be achieved through feedback and through consultation with the Children in Care Council (CiCC).
- 5.4** The strategy will be under review to ensure that the commissioning intentions are meeting the needs of children looked after in the City of London. Part of this review will take into consideration any complaints or complements that have been received in regard to placements.

- 1.5. This strategy runs until 2017, and has now been subject to a mid-period review.

## **6 Concluding Remarks**

- 6.1 The sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for children in care sets out the City's intentions in providing fostering services for children looked after in the City, which meets their needs in relation to quality and diversity. The uniqueness of the demography in the City is not currently conducive in meeting these needs and therefore the City commission's independent fostering agencies through the Pan London agreement.
- 6.2 The City is providing preventative services through Early Help to prevent children and young people coming into care, this has supported the City in maintaining low numbers of City children coming into care. A significant proportion of the City of London's looked after population are unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC). A key area of development has been to bring both City of London resident children and UASC together to ensure that they have a say in the development of services for children in care. This has been achieved through the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and opportunities for children in care and care leavers to be involved in the monitoring of commissioned services.



## Fostering Monitoring Form

**Fostering Provision**.....**Date seen**.....

**Present**.....  
.....

### Contract Review

Pan London/ Organisational contract in place.....Yes/No

Individual child contract in place .....Yes/No

Last Reviewed.....Date.....

Last Monitoring Meeting.....Date.....

### Ofsted Inspection

Last Ofsted Inspection Outcome.....Date.....

Outstanding Actions Progress.....Date.....

### Children Placed

Name.....Date Placed.....Foster Carers.....

Name.....Date Placed.....Foster Carers.....

Name.....Date Placed.....Foster Carers.....

Name.....Date Placed.....Foster Carers.....

Name.....Date Placed.....Foster Carers.....

### Current Placement Costs/ Reviewed

Cost.....Reviewed.....

Cost.....Reviewed.....

Cost.....Reviewed.....

Cost.....Reviewed.....

## Finance Review/

### Comment.....

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Placement	Evidence	Checked By	Comment
Is there someone that the child can speak to if they are worried or concerned?			
How do foster carers promote the child identity and individual needs?			
What support and training do staff have in promoting positive behaviour and relationships?			
Safeguarding Children – Training, LADO procedures and reporting mechanisms.			
Does the agency have clear policy and procedures in place in relation to children missing from care/ are foster carers aware,			
How often are placements checked/reviewed in regard to Health and safety, what training is available for foster carers?			
Placement suitability in regard to leisure, contact and supporting educational needs.			
Feedback from children and young people on placement, provider and commissioned service.			
Promoting independence and moves to adulthood and leaving care- How is this supported.			
Recruiting, selection and assessing of foster carers.			
Information on agency decision maker and fostering panel.			
Fostering agencies statement of purpose and children's guide.			
Stability of work force, safer recruitment processes			
Learning and development of foster carers, sample of training opportunities available, and frequency.			
Supervision and support for foster carers. Out of normal working hours support.			
Handling of professional allegations and suspicions of harm. Policy and procedures.			
Notification of significant events LA's, Social Worker, Safeguarding Board.			

**CSE / Radicalisation and Prevent agenda (obtained from LSCB/Police)**

**Intelligence on prevalence where children and young people placed;**

CSE.....Yes/No (delete as required)

Radicalisation..... Yes/No (delete as required)

**Foster Carers have had training on;**

CSE.....Yes/No (delete as required)

Radicalisation..... Yes/No (delete as required)

**Actions outstanding/ review date**

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.....  
.....  
.....  
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**Copy of Form sent to agency...Yes/ No.....Date.....**

**Next Review Date.....**

**Signed.....Date.....**