

Summary Sheet

Council Report

Title

Placement Sufficiency Report

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Ian Thomas, Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services

Report Author

Ian Walker, Head of Service, Children in Care

Ward(s) Affected

All

Summary

Rotherham MBC has been too reliant on the private providers of fostering and residential placements for its looked after children. This continues to present significant challenges in terms of managing the budget given the additional costs that such placements incur. In addition by placing young people outside of the authority some degree of control is lost over the services and support available to such young people such as in respect of their education, CAMHS and health needs provision. As a result the outcomes achieved by these young people can be negatively impacted.

Rotherham CYPS is currently undertaking a series of initiatives and developments to enable more looked after children to remain looked after 'in-house'. Some of these proposals are predicated on an invest to save basis which will be achieved both by reducing the numbers of children in our care and placing more children within Rotherham placements – 'the right children in the right placement'.

Recommendations

CPP is recommended to note the contents of the report and endorse the proposals included to make Rotherham more self-sufficient in terms of its placement provision.

List of Appendices Included

None

Background Papers

None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

No

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Title Placement Sufficiency Report (Main Report)

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That CPP note the contents of this report and endorse the proposals contained in it that are designed to reduce the reliance on Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) and Out of Authority (OoA) placements to meet the placement needs of looked after children in Rotherham.

2. Background

- 2.1 As of the end of July there were a total of 442 looked after children in Rotherham which reflects an ongoing upward trend.
- 2.2 These young people were placed in the following placement types:-
- 168 with In-House foster Carers
 - 17 with Relatives or Friends on a kinship fostering basis in Rotherham
 - 149 with Independent foster placements (IFA's)
 - 47 with Out of Authority children's Homes (OoAs) placed in a Residential School
 - 2 in a secure unit
 - 1 in a Mother and baby unit
 - 54 in a variety of other placements including pre-adoptive placements, independent living and living at home as part of a rehabilitation plan subject to the Placement with Parents Regulations.
- 2.3 As a result 55% of looked after children are living in privately provided placements which falls some way short of the internal target set of a reduction to 40%.
- 2.4 This reliance on the private providers brings with it some significant financial consequences. The average IFA cost can vary between £714 per week for a standard placement to £1012 per week for an enhanced placement with a total annual budget of £5.07m per annum. In house placements cost on average less than half this amount. In respect of the OoAs the financial impact is even more significant with the 52 placements costing an average of £3669 per week leading to an annual budget being set of £6.95m which, on current projections, looks likely to be overspent.
- 2.5 In addition the lack of in-house provision has a discernible impact on the outcomes achieved by those young people. This is aggravated by the fact that 108 of these placements are more than 20 miles from their home address with 55 children being more than 50 miles and 2 children more than 100 miles from their home address. These distances can make social worker and commissioning oversight of the placements difficult in terms of ensuring that the young person is receiving the services that have actually been commissioned such as therapeutic interventions, enhanced staff support packages, respite care etc. Furthermore, these placements bring with them a dependency on other agencies to provide for many of the other needs of the looked after young

person including their education, non-teaching support, CAMHS intervention and health and dental treatment. There is evidence that some children from Rotherham are experiencing a limited or lower priority service from some other agencies in terms of having these needs met and this can have an impact on their outcomes.

- 2.6 Despite the additional costs incurred via the IFA placements the performance data would indicate that they do little to provide additional placement stability for looked after children. Between February and July 2016 four in-house placements came to an unplanned end where 18 IFA placements were similarly disrupted. It could be argued that this is not surprising given that our older and more challenging looked after young people are more likely to be placed within the IFAs. However, placement stability is key to good outcomes being achieved with every change of placement and school being assessed at reducing GCSE grades by one third. With over 12% of the cohort having had 3 or more placement moves in the past 12 months up 54 young people will be disadvantaged by the equivalent of 2 grades in their GCSEs even before they sit their exams. As a result the Sufficiency Strategy is designed to place more young people within in-house foster placements, increase placement stability and support young people to achieve better outcomes.

3. Key Issues

- 3.1 To address this reliance on the IFA and OoA providers Rotherham CYPS is currently developing its Sufficiency Strategy in order to increase the proportion of children in care placed within in-house provision.

There are 5 main strands to this Strategy:-

- i. The Foster Carers Payments Scheme, Support and Development – by reviewing the way in which foster carers are financially rewarded and supported and trained it is hoped that we can increase the number of in-house foster carers by 15 fostering households (net) per annum.
- ii. The Rotherham Therapeutic Team Transformation – by enhancing and expanding the therapeutic support available to looked after children and their carers it is a reasonable assumption to make that less young people will suffer the series of placement disruptions that often culminates in them having to be placed with the private providers. In addition this should also reduce the need to place such young people in OoA 'Therapeutic Residential Placements' in order to have those therapeutic needs met.

This Transformation will be implemented in conjunction with the terms of reference for the Children with Complex Care Needs Panel being revised so that the Panel is more directed at developing multi-agency packages of enhanced support to enable more young people to remain placed in in-house placements.

- iii. Edge of Care – by developing a 'virtual' multi-agency team that can provide immediate support to families at times of crisis it is anticipated that the number of young people who are admitted to care via Section 20 of the Children Act (Voluntary Accommodation)

will be reduced. This is especially relevant as most of these young people are adolescents for whom there is a shortage of placements in Rotherham making them more likely to end up placed with the private providers. This enhanced support package will include a significant investment in Family Group Conferencing which aims to identify and formalise the internal support mechanisms within family and social networks to enhance the resilience of parents and young people.

- iv. The Adoption Regionalisation – Rotherham is committed to the regionalisation of adoption services in line with the Government guidance on the issue. This programme should ensure that prospective adopters receive faster responses, better matching takes place, there is a quicker pathway from the Agency Decision Making regarding the suitability of a child for adoption to family finding being completed and that there is better post-adoption support. Within this programme Rotherham is looking to take the lead on Early Permanence Planning and the development of an integrated I.T. system.
- v. The Taking Care Scheme – working in partnership with the NSPCC, Rotherham aims to support up to 30 young people to return to the care of their birth families over a two year period in a safe and supported manner. It is generally acknowledged that as looked after young people approach adulthood they tend to ‘drift’ back to the care of their parents. By formalising this process it is anticipated that it can be accelerated whilst at the same time reducing the risks of family relationships breaking down again in the future.

4. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 4.1 The current model of placement provision is unsustainable in anything other than the very short-term given the financial implications and the negative impact it can have on the outcomes achieved by young people. However, there can be no magic bullet and this multi-strand Sufficiency Strategy is considered to be the best means of achieving a significant reduction in the reliance on IFA and OoA placements.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 There has been appropriate consultation in respect of each of the individual strands.

6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 6.1 It is planned that all of the strands will be implemented and in progress between the next 3 and 6 months. The accountable manager will be Ian Walker, Interim Head of Service.

7. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 7.1 Each of the individual strands has its own financial implications as set out in their individual DLT reports. Overall it is anticipated that they will bring significant budget benefits to the department.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 The approaches set out in the sufficiency strategy will contribute to the Council's compliance with its general duty under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within its area who are in need and so far as is consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families, by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children's needs.

9. Human Resources Implications

- 9.1 None noted

10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 10.1 The proposals contained in this report are designed to have a positive impact of the outcomes achieved by looked after young people.

11. Equalities and Human Rights Implications

- 11.1 These proposals will also ensure a better equality of opportunity for looked after young people and to better ensure their Human Rights are respected.

12. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

- 12.1 None

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 The main risk is that if these Strands are not successfully implemented in full then the significant budget and outcomes pressure that currently exists will be perpetuated. These risks can be mitigated by the successful implementation of each of the 5 strands.

14. Accountable Officer(s)

Ian Walker – Interim Head of Service, Children in Care.

Approvals Obtained from:-

Finance and Corporate Services, CYPS:- Mark Chamber

Legal Services:- Neil Concannon

HR Services):- Luke Ricketts

This report is published on the Council's website or can be found at:-

<http://moderngov.rotherham.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?Categories=>