

Council Report

Overview Scrutiny Management Board – 17th February 2017

Title

Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2017-2021

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

Yes

Director Approving Submission of the Report

Ian Thomas, Strategic Director for CYPS

Report author(s):

Angela Tracey

Children and Young People's Services

Tel: 01709 834257

Email: Angela.Tracey@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected

All

Executive Summary

The Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy has been developed in line with the duty to provide or procure placements for Children Looked After (CLA) by the local authority (Children Act 1989, Sufficiency Statutory Guidance 2010, Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2011). This includes a duty of 'sufficiency' that requires Local Authorities and Children's Trust partners to ensure that there is a range of sufficient placements which meet the needs of children and young people in care, and to take steps to develop and shape service provision to meet the needs of all children and young people in care at a local level, as far as is reasonably possible.

The Strategy sets out how Rotherham Children's Services will fulfil its role as a Corporate Parent and meet its statutory sufficiency duty by providing good quality care, effective parenting and support to children and young people in and leaving our care. It describes our 'one market' approach to the commissioning and provision of secure, safe and appropriate accommodation and support to children in care and care leavers over the next four years.

The outcome of the strategy will be to safely and appropriately reduce the number of young people requiring care by the local authority, responding to the challenges identified and improving outcomes for children.

Whilst this Strategy is not primarily a financial one, it is expected that the commissioning and strategic intentions set out will provide significant cost avoidance and savings opportunities and are essential to the sustainability of improved outcomes and the Local Authority budget.

Recommendations

- That the Overview Scrutiny Management Board is asked to consider the attached Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2017-2021.

List of Appendices Included

Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2017-2021.

Background Papers

Reports to the Cabinet and Commissioners Decision Making Meeting – Council Medium Term Financial Strategy Update 14 November 2016.

Investment Bids – CYPS

Executive Summary, Safeguarding Pressures Phase 5 – December 2016 – Association of Directors of Children’s Services

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

No

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2017-2021

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Overview Scrutiny Management Board is asked to consider the attached Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2017-2021.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Looked After Children's Sufficiency Strategy sets out how Rotherham Children's Services will fulfil its role as a Corporate Parent and meet its statutory sufficiency duty by providing good quality care, effective parenting and support to children and young people in and leaving our care. It describes a 'one market' approach to the commissioning and provision of secure, safe and appropriate accommodation and support to children in care and care leavers over the next four years.
- 2.3 The commissioning approach outlined will rethink services and ways of working with families. Investment in the right support at the right time will be necessary, enhancing early help and prevention so that fewer children come into care in the first place. Participation will be encouraged by engaging customers throughout the commissioning process to ensure that children, young people and their families help design services and influence the way in which they are delivered.
- 2.4 Achieving this requires the collective engagement of the local authority and its partners working together, involving children and young people in the decisions affecting their lives.
- 2.5 The Looked After Children's Strategy 2016-2019, previously considered by the Improvement Board in November 2016, describes five strategic objectives required to improve the outcomes for looked after children and which inform the strategic intentions in this Sufficiency Strategy:
- To improve the degree and timeliness of placement stability and permanence and ensure that children are able to enjoy a continuity of relationships.
 - To improve the emotional wellbeing and physical health of looked after children (which will also support care and school placement stability).
 - To improve the educational progress and attainment and narrow the gap between attainment of LAC and their peers.
 - To improve the support and opportunities for care leavers and to increase the number and proportion of them who are in Education Employment or Training (EET).
 - To listen to children and young people so as to ensure that they can influence their own plans as well as wider service delivery and development.

3. Key Issues

- 3.1 Rotherham has an increasingly high number of children in its care. In common generally with the national picture, there has been a consistent upward trend year on year in the numbers of children and young people looked after by the Local Authority. However in Rotherham the number has increased from 424 as of January 2016 to 488 as of December 2016 (15% increase in a 12 month period) and is expected to increase without intervention.

- 3.2 Analysis of Rotherham Looked After Children key data and current provision identified the following challenges:
- There are too many looked after children in the care of Rotherham MBC. Historically poorly performing services have left a legacy of more complex need as well as a legacy of rising numbers.
 - There is a need to ensure that the Local Authority has provision which enables it to manage demand and that preventative provision and early help is in place to minimise the number of children coming into care. For some children, for whom the right decision has been to become looked after, there is insufficient timely access to appropriate specialist support.
 - The number of those children in care placed out of borough is too high, closing gaps in the provision of sufficient local placement accommodation, preferably in a family setting, is required so children and young people in care and care leavers are able to continue to live within or close to the Borough.
 - There is a need to work with key providers of specialist provision to help us to meet a range of needs and sufficiency of placement provision. More needs to be done to ensure the efficient and effective operation of our local market. Delivering much better value in terms of quality, price, unit costs and outcomes is essential across all provision.
- 3.3 The outcome of the strategy will be to safely and appropriately reduce the number of young people requiring care by the local authority whilst responding to the challenges identified.
- 3.4 By 2021 we expect that the interventions will safely reducing the number of LAC to around 399 (closer to the statistical neighbour average of 64 per 10,000 population i.e. 360). The planned reduction in the number of looked after children is expected to result in a net reduction of 61 placements; 4 in 2017/18; 13 in 2018/19; 22 in 2019/20; and 22 in 2020/21.
- 3.5 Whilst this Strategy is not primarily a financial one it is expected that the commissioning and strategic intentions set out will provide significant cost avoidance and savings opportunities and are essential to the sustainability of improved outcomes and the Local Authority budget.

4. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 4.1 In response to the challenges identified, the commissioning intention has been to develop a range of preventative and support services/ interventions, some of which have required investment to facilitate the reduction in numbers and deliver the necessary cost reductions and improved outcomes. The strategy is founded on securing those improved outcomes through provision of prevention and early help services, adequate support once children are looked after, alongside significant social work practice improvement.
- Supporting children and young people on the 'edge of care' to stay at home
 - Returning children to their birth/extended families when safe to do so
 - Supporting permanency through Adoption and special guardianship
 - Placement commissioning and development
 - Support around the placement to meet the individual needs of the child/young person and carer (including SEMH needs)

- 4.2 This strategy sets out the challenges and the commissioning intentions, the Council and Commissioners have already approved a number of investments, described above to manage demand for services, achieve the necessary improvements in outcomes and longer term cost reduction required.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 This strategy articulates the investments and commissioning which have been developed in conjunction with other Directorates and Partners including Adults Social Care, Housing, Health and Schools.

6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 6.1 The timetable for the implementation of this decision the subject of the report to the Cabinet and Commissioners Decision Making Meeting on the 14 November 2016 for the Council Medium Term Financial Strategy Update.

7. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 7.1 The financial impact of the Strategy was outlined in the report to the Cabinet and Commissioners Decision Making Meeting for the Council Medium Term Financial Strategy Update on the 14th November 2016 and ratified at Council on 7th December. The report included a number of investments and savings related to the Looked after Children and Care Leavers Strategy.
- 7.2 The Council Medium Term Financial Strategy sets out an expected cost avoidance of £5.6m directly related to the implementation of this Strategy by March 2021.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 The Strategy proposed by this report will underpin the Council's compliance with the statutory duties it owes towards looked after children, such as the duties under the Children Act 1989 (as amended by the Children and Families Act 2014) to provide accommodation for and to safeguard and promote the welfare of looked after children.

9. Human Resources Implications

- 9.1 There are no direct employee implications arising from this report.

10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 10.1 This strategy aims to improve the outcomes for Children either through prevention and early intervention or in providing support to meet their individual needs should they become Looked After.
- 10.2 The strategy recognises that the future of young people leaving care continues well into their adulthood. Services will look to build on strengths whilst children and young people are in care to develop their resilience. Transition pathways will offer support up to the age of 25.

11. Equalities and Human Rights Implications

- 11.1 There are no direct equalities or human rights implications arising from this report.

12. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

- 12.1 Achieving this requires the collective engagement of the local authority and its partners working together, involving children and young people in the decisions affecting their lives. The investments and intentions described in this strategy have been developed in conjunction with other Directorates and Partners including Adults Social Care, Housing, Health and schools.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 The effectiveness of the interventions and investments will be tracked in terms of contributing to safely and appropriately reducing the number of children and young people requiring care by 61 placements. A number of key measures will be established which will help us to understand whether we are making a difference.
- 13.2 This strategy will be supported by a transformational commissioning action plan and a commissioning strategy. There will be quarterly reviews and oversight from our Corporate Parenting Panel. It will be owned and implemented by all professionals and partner organisations working with children, young people, their parents and carers.

14. Accountable Officer(s)

- 14.1 Ian Thomas, Strategic Director for Children and Young People's Services.
Linda Harper (Interim Assistant Director, Commissioning, Performance And Quality – Children and Young People's Services).

Approvals Obtained from:

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services: Mark Chambers 25.01.17

Director of Legal Services: Neil Concannon, 25.01.17

Head of HR Services: Theresa Caswell, Business Partner, 25.01.17

Head of Procurement: Joanne Kirk, Purchase to Pay Manager, 24.01.17

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