

### **Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Improving Lives Select Commission – 06 September 2022

### **Report Title**

Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2023 - 2027

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

Yes

### **Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Suzanne Joyner, Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services

### **Report Author(s)**

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### **Ward(s) Affected**

Borough-Wide

### **Report Summary**

Rotherham's Looked After Children's Sufficiency Strategy 2019-2022 is due for review in 2022. The revised Looked After Children and Care Leaver's Sufficiency Strategy focuses on what we know about our children and young people, including their voices, and the information about local homes for children. The strategy also provides all our latest data trends, what our priorities are and the delivery plan to achieve these.

This report provides an update on the delivery of the previous strategy and the development of the new Strategy.

### **Recommendations**

1. Members of the Improving Lives Select Committee note and inform the development of the new Strategy.
2. Members of the Improving Lives Select Committee note and endorse the governance arrangements for delivery of the Strategy

### **List of Appendices Included**

Appendix 1 The Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2023 – 2027

## **Background Papers**

Looked After Children's (LAC) Sufficiency Strategy 2020-22

## **Council Approval Required**

You should refer to [Appendix 9 of the Constitution – Responsibility for Functions](#) – to check whether your recommendations require approval by Council, as well as Cabinet or a committee. You should take advice from Democratic Services if you are not sure.

No

## **Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

## Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2023 – 2027

1.	<b>Background</b>
1.1	<p>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 by the Local Authority. The legislation and guidance include Children Act 1989, Sufficiency Statutory Guidance 2010, Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2011). The duty of ‘sufficiency’ 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. There is also a responsibility 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.</p>
1.2	<p>The Strategy sets out how Rotherham Children and Young People’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 care. It describes the principles that are applied when seeking to commission the provision of secure, safe and appropriate accommodation and support, to children in care and care leavers over the next three years.</p>
1.3	<p>The Strategy provides the underpinning needs analysis that will inform market management, seeking to ensure that there is the right mix of provision available to meet the needs of children and young people and that this provision mix provides positive outcomes and value for money. Whilst this Strategy is not primarily a financial one, it is expected that the commissioning and strategic intentions are essential to the sustainability of improved outcomes and the Local Authority budget.</p>
1.4	<p>The previous LAC Sufficiency Strategy was approved by Cabinet in June 2019. The key priorities of the Market Management Project were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To reduce reliance on Independent Fostering Agencies by recruiting more in-house foster carers; and</li> <li>• To develop local residential provision and secure block-bookings for Rotherham children where this will achieve best value;</li> <li>• Explore opportunities for regional collaborative working arrangements.</li> <li>• Review the Rotherham Fostering Framework to ensure that it continues to deliver high quality placements and value for money;</li> <li>• Implement a Dynamic Purchasing Framework to ensure that sufficiency is achieved for Rotherham care leavers; and</li> <li>• Work in partnership with Adult Care &amp; Housing to ensure that sufficiency is achieved for vulnerable 16- and 17-year-olds.</li> </ul>
2.	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	<p>The previous LAC Sufficiency Strategy was approved by Cabinet in June 2019, progress against all priorities has been reviewed to support the development of the new strategy.</p> <p><b>1. To reduce reliance on Independent Fostering Agencies by recruiting more in-house foster carers</b></p>

A significant programme of work has progressed to increase the number of in-house foster carers through recruitment, including significant investment in a digital marketing contract.

Whilst there have been some successes in recruitment (at a time where this is a challenge nationally) and development of available fostering places, we have not increased the number of in-house foster carers. National issues impacting on retention of local authority foster carers, including the expansion of the independent fostering market, have impacted in Rotherham, as such the programme of work now focuses on retention in addition to recruitment.

## **2. To develop local residential provision and secure block-bookings for Rotherham children where this will achieve best value**

The February 2020 Cabinet report agreed a proposal to develop a range of in-house residential provisions, including emergency accommodation for Rotherham looked after children. 16 residential beds and 2 emergency beds across 7 registered settings.

- 4 new children's home purchased or acquired and fitted out to meet the specification informed by young people's service and Ofsted;
- Recruitment of 4 managers and 44 staff;
- 60 days of induction training covering Therapeutic Crisis Intervention, evidence based therapeutic approaches, Signs of Safety and Rotherham Family Approach;
- 3 children's homes opened with Ofsted registrations;
- Ofsted rating of Good for all children's homes on first inspection
- 5 young people living in the homes since opening;
- 2 of the 5 young people have been supported to 'step down' from residential care into foster care settings as a direct result of the work offered by the service.

Block bookings were secured, however due to matching (identifying children who can safely live together and with the provider of a home) best value was not always achieved.

## **3. Explore opportunities for regional collaborative working arrangements.**

Rotherham continues to work with other authorities in Yorkshire and the Humber as part of the White Rose Framework. Despite a number of providers choosing to operate 'off framework' reducing the collective buying power, this remains a collaborative opportunity to explore regional working arrangements.

## **4. Review the Rotherham Fostering Framework to ensure that it continues to deliver high quality placements and value for money;**

Rotherham joined the White Rose Framework for fostering in April 2020. Despite a number of providers choosing to operate 'off framework' reducing the collective buying power, this remains a collaborative opportunity to explore regional working arrangements.

**5. Implement a Dynamic Purchasing Framework to ensure that sufficiency is achieved for Rotherham care leavers;**

Rotherham developed a 16+ Support and Accommodation flexible purchasing systems (FPS) which went live in January 2021. The purpose of the FPS was for our Commissioning team and Social Care to continue working closely to secure good quality provision for our young people. The FPS also allows Rotherham to develop and shape the market; build relationships with existing and new providers; monitor quality and provide a compliant route to market.

Ofsted will develop a registration and inspection framework for 16+ accommodation and begin registering providers from April 2023. In preparation for this the Commissioning Team will review the Quality Assurance Document they use to quality assure our commissioned provision, to include the four national standards, to focus providers on the requirements for registration.

The managers of both Hollowgate and House Project (our in-house provision) are working together to undertake analysis of where they are at against the standards with a view to be ready to apply for registration when the window opens.

**6. Work in partnership with Adult Care & Housing to ensure that sufficiency is achieved for vulnerable 16- and 17-year-olds**

Collaborative working ensured sharing of good practice to inform the commissioning of accommodation for 16- and 17-year-olds who are homeless. Work is underway to further develop the dynamic purchasing framework to expand it to include this cohort.

Accommodation for young people aged 16 and 17 because they are homeless not looked after children will still be relevant for Ofsted registration. CYPS are working with adult commissioning to understand the new developments and mirror the regulation requirements for their young people's projects.

2.2

To support the development of a new strategy, regular monthly core group meetings with key people involved in the services have taken place along with benchmarking against the 'What Works for Children's Social Care' independent review.

These have helped to inform the structure, analysis, and content of the new Strategy.

The strategy has been developed in line with the principles of the Rotherham Charter (Four Cornerstones):

1. Welcome and care
2. Value and include
3. Communicate
4. Work in partnership

	<p>This is reflective of the work undertaken by the Genuine Partnerships team which involves an equal partnership between Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC), facilitated by the Education Psychology Service (EPS), and Rotherham Parent Carer's Forum.</p>
2.3	<p>Corporate Parenting is the term used in law to describe our collective responsibility to care for, love and champion our children in care and our care leavers and ensure they have every opportunity to reach their full potential as they grow up in our family.</p> <p>This strategy has been developed in line with the promises we have made, as corporate parents, to all of our looked after children.</p> <p>The Looked After Children Council have also agreed for the Strategy to be considered at their meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> September. They will provide specific guidance on the presentation and design of the strategy, the relevance of the graphs (including whether any contain identifiable information that may make them feel uncomfortable), feedback on the aspirations/ priorities and their voice to supplement to LAC promises.</p>
2.4	<p>Cabinet have maintained oversight of the key priorities identified in the LAC Sufficient Strategy 2019-22 through reports to Cabinet on fostering recruitment and development of residential provision, this has focused on in-house services.</p> <p>Internal Audit have been commissioned to undertake an audit to provide assurance that the originally agreed intentions of the LAC sufficiency strategy have been achieved.</p> <p>In order to achieve and report an overall level of assurance the review will consider and provide assurance on the management of the following risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structured, planned, and coherent oversight of all of the outcomes and activity associated with the LAC Sufficiency strategy may not be taking place.</li> <li>• The current LAC Sufficiency strategy may not be complete including updates to reflect changes in demand and any barriers to the implementation of the inhouse provision.</li> <li>• The outcomes in the LAC Sufficiency Strategy for 2019-2022 may not have been achieved and any lessons identified transferred to early drafts of the 2023-2027 strategy document.</li> </ul> <p>Recommended actions will be incorporated into the development of the strategy and associated governance arrangements.</p>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Options considered and recommended proposal</b>
3.1	<p>Recommended proposal:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Members of the Improving Lives Select Committee note and inform the development of the new Strategy.</li> </ol>

	2. Members of the Improving Lives Select Committee note and endorse the governance arrangements for delivery of the Strategy
<b>4.</b>	<b>Consultation on proposal</b>
4.1	<p>The development of the revised Strategy has involved collaborative working across Rotherham, including Looked After Children and Care Leavers, First Response, Locality Social Work, Commissioning, Performance, Early Help, Legal Services and Finance.</p> <p>Further engagement has also influenced the document including Public Health, the Integrated Care Board Rotherham Place, TRFT, RDaSH, Residential and Independent Fostering providers, In-house fostering, Rotherham Therapeutic Team, Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership and LAC Council.</p> <p>The input from Improving Lives Select Commission will be valued. This will inform further development of the strategy and the proposed governance arrangements which will progress to Cabinet for approval.</p>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision</b>
5.1	The Strategy focuses on what we know about our children and young people, including their voices, and the information about local homes for children. The strategy also provides all our latest data trends, what our aspirations are and the delivery plan to achieve these over the next four years 2023 - 2027
<b>6.</b>	<b>Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications</b>
6.1	Where there is a need for the Council to commission services from third party organisations to deliver the strategy, this must be done in compliance with the Council's own Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (as amended). Early consideration needs to be given in the development of any commissioned services to ensure the chosen delivery vehicle includes the flexibility to meet the requirements of the Strategy.
<b>7.</b>	<b>Legal Advice and Implications</b>
7.1	There are no legal implications from the Review of the strategy.
<b>8.</b>	<b>Human Resources Advice and Implications</b>
	No direct HR implications within this report.
<b>9.</b>	<b>Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults</b>
9.1	The Sufficiency duty requires Rotherham Council to ensure that there is a range of sufficient homes which meet the needs of children and young people in care locally. The implications to vulnerable children and young

	people and vulnerable adults who are care leavers associated with this duty are covered within the Report and Appendices.
<b>10.</b>	<b>Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications</b>
10.1	A full equality impact assessment will be submitted to Cabinet for decision. Equality implications for looked after children, care leavers and foster carers are reflected in the draft strategy.
<b>11.</b>	<b>Implications for CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions and Climate Change</b>
	N/A.
<b>12.</b>	<b>Implications for Partners</b>
12.1	Implications for partners are reflected in the draft strategy.
<b>13.</b>	<b>Risks and Mitigation</b>
13.1	These are referred to Appendix 2 .
	<b>Accountable Officer(s)</b>

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