

Public Report
Improving Lives Select Commission

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Improving Lives Select Commission – 04 November 2025

Report Title

Children in Care and Care Leavers Sufficiency Update

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

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Nicola Curley, Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide or Name of Ward

Name of Ward

Report Summary

The Looked After Children's Sufficiency Strategy (2023-2027) 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 new strategy over the past 12 months.

Recommendations

That the Improving Lives Select Commission:-

- 1) Consider the progress made against the delivery plan for the Looked After Children's Sufficiency Strategy.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy

Appendix 2 Care Leavers Addendum to the Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy

Background Papers

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

Name of Committee – Click here to enter a date.

Name of Committee – Click here to enter a date.

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

1. Background

- 1.1 The Looked After Children 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 as set out at Section 22G Children Act 1989.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 The current Looked After Children's Sufficiency Strategy (2023-2027) was approved at Cabinet in October 2022. Key objectives identified in the strategy are below:
 - More Young People aged 10+ are able to be cared for safely in their families and communities.
 - Children and young people have access to a range of homes (internal and external options) that meet their needs and improve their outcomes.
 - All services take the Rotherham Family Approach to ensure all Rotherham children and young people are "resilient, successful and safe," evidenced by Quality Assurance activity.
 - Children and young people are able to access the support they need when they need it because Health, Education and Care Services share a joint understanding of the needs of children and young people in Rotherham and use this to inform commissioning and service delivery.

- Children and Young People, and their families and carers are able to access CAMHs assessment and intervention when needed.
- Children, young people, families, and carers benefit from additional social value in Rotherham e.g., more employment opportunities.
- More children, young people and families benefit from additional support to improve outcomes and access employment.

2. Key Issues

In House Residential Progress

2.1 As of October 2025, there are 467 Children in Care. Over a 12 month trend this has reduced from 506. A breakdown of the Children in Care Cohort is given below:

- There are 467 Children in Care
- 215 children are cared for in house provision
- 154 children are placed in Independent Fostering Agencies
- 104 children are placed in house foster care
- 60% of long-term children in care placements have been stable for at least 2 years
- 45 children are placed in residential care.
- 79% of children in care live within 20 miles of home
- 77% of children in care are placed in a family-based setting
- There are 344 Care Leavers
- 98.2% of Care Leavers are in appropriate accommodation
- 111 Care Leavers are living independently
- 65% of Care Leavers are in Education, Employment or Training

2.2 The continued trend of a reduction in young people aligns to a focus on strengths-based practice and family intervention. The over-arching Sufficiency Strategy is focused on placement stability and the continued development of in-house provision.

2.3 Increasing local sufficiency is supported by transformation work to increase the amount of in house placements, through recruiting more foster carers, develop residential provision and creating a range of accommodation options for Care Leavers.

2.4 In House residential progress update:

Phase 1

Objectives: 1 x 4-bed home and 1-bed emergency accommodation (5 beds in total).

Target	Achieved	Next Steps
4 Bed Home met	4 children now living in the home	Complete

1 Bed Emergency Home complete		Complete
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Phase 2

Objectives: 2 x 2-bed home and 1-bed emergency accommodation (5 beds in total)

Target	Achieved	Next Steps
2 Bed Home met	Ofsted March 2021. Two children now living in the home.	Complete
2 Bed Home met	Registered with Ofsted September 2021. Two children now living in the home.	Complete
1 Bed Emergency Provision Delayed Home scheduled to open Q3 25/26		Ofsted registration submitted September 2025

Phase 3

Objectives: 4 x 2 bed homes

Target	Achieved	Next Steps
2 Bed Home complete	Two children now living in the home.	Complete
2 Bed Home delayed	Planning permission granted Capital programme to be complete Q3 25/26	Awaiting submission of Ofsted registration
2 Bed Home Delayed Home scheduled to open Q3 25/26.	Ofsted registration submitted	Ofsted registration submitted September 2025
2 bed Home Delayed Home scheduled to open Q1 26/27	Home identified. Planning permission granted. Awaiting procurement for capital programme	Procurement. Capital Programme.

Phase 4

Objectives: 2x2 Bed Homes

Target	Achieved	Next Steps
2 Bed Home complete	Home open and two young people living in the home.	Complete
2 Bed Home met	Home opened August 2025. 1 young person in the home with a vacancy of one bed.	Complete

Accommodation

- 2.5 As detailed above the in-house residential programme has a current capacity of 15 beds with 14 beds occupied at time of writing. All properties are now identified to complete phases 1-4 with the remaining beds currently set to become available by the end of Q1 26/27 subject to successful registration with Ofsted
- 2.6 Average occupancy presumptions are set at 85%, with progress showing that the 2 bed properties are achieving this figure on a more consistent basis. Occupancy rates given sometimes differ from original assumptions for 2 bed properties; this includes when a young person has needed a period of solo placement or where beds become vacant due to transition.
- 2.7 Achieving full occupancy has been a challenge for the programme, particularly on the 4 bed children's home, completed during phase 1. This is often due to the difficulty in successfully matching young people to the home.
- 2.8 The needs analysis shared as part of the previous update to Cabinet recognised that whilst overall Children in Care numbers are reducing there is a forecast increase in the numbers of Care Leavers. This is being driven predominantly by numbers of current Children in Care moving through to adulthood. The needs analysis forecast that there could be as many as 551 Care Leavers by 2027 if demand remained the same and placements continued to be made in the same way.
- 2.9 As of September 2025, there are 141 children in care aged 12-15 who will likely require appropriate accommodation at age 16. This does not take into account any new entrants in to care at this age range and/or any changes in demand.
- 2.10 The Care Leavers Strategy Strategic Priority Two: Safe and Affordable Accommodation highlights the need for suitable accommodation for Care Leavers and acknowledges that sourcing the right accommodation is becoming more challenging.

2.11 The Strategy states agencies and services in Rotherham will work together to:

- Ensure there is a range of suitable accommodation options, including staying put, supported lodgings, semi supported, shared accommodation, houses of multiple occupancy and independent accommodation.
- Expand our in house supported accommodation to 20 dispersed properties which is staffed 24/7. These properties will help young people to get ready for independent living.
- Maintain close links between commissioning, children in care, leaving care, residential and in house supported accommodation to forecast accommodation needs and commission appropriate services.
- Establish a 16+ Panel to track young people to appropriate destinations.
- Work with trusted providers to ensure accommodation and support is of good quality.
- Support Care Leavers to develop independence skills, to ensure they transition positively to independent living, including budgeting, paying bills, food shopping, cooking, and prioritising.
- Work with Care Leavers and services to jointly create Pathway plans which consider future living arrangements for young people, including what support will be offered to help to get them there

2.12 Care Leavers accommodation is sourced both through in house provision and as part of an externally commissioned 16 plus framework. Placement types on the commissioned framework include both Lot 1 Group living, Lot 2 dispersed accommodation with floating support and Lot 3 floating support only. There are currently 76 Care Leavers accessing commissioned accommodation provision.

2.13 In house supported accommodation for young people aged 16-18 years old aims to develop independent living skills, so Care Leavers are equipped to live in the community within 12 months, or by 18 years of age.

2.14 In house 16+ group living has a capacity of 9 placements. This includes the offer of floating support for Care leavers who transition out of the group living setting in to dispersed accommodation, The 16+ in house model provides a throughput of accommodation to support independence with opportunities for Care Leavers to take on their own tenancy within a dispersed property.

2.15 Taking into account the forecast rise in demand for placements significant work in 2025 has been completed to track young people through to independence as part of each Care Leaver's individual pathway plan. This has helped reduce overall demand for placements and ensure more of the Care Leaver population are the opportunity to live independently when they

are able. The 16+ panel has supported an additional 60 Care leavers to live independently since the previous update to Cabinet in November 2024.

- 2.16 Priorities for Care Leavers' sufficiency over the next period includes continued work with Commissioned Services to ensure sufficient places are available to meet demand and achieve best value. This will include analysis of the overall Children in Care cohort to identify any existing gaps in provision or where needs could be best met through developing additional in-house provision.

- 2.17 To support this a feasibility exercise in relation to creating additional in house supported accommodation provision will be completed. This will include options to increase both group living accommodation and dispersed properties to continue to enhance accommodation options to support more Care Leavers to achieve independence.

2.18 **Foster Carer Recruitment and Transformation Programme**

As part of the ambition for more young people to be supported by in house Foster Carers, there has been continued progress to expand the Foster Carer Recruitment programme. This includes both a digital and place-based marketing approach.

- 2.19 Current recruitment and retention of foster carers is successful, with a number of foster carers currently being assessed for RMBC and fewer foster carers resigning from the authority. Benchmarking of the Rotherham offer to Foster Carers takes place on a regular basis and remains competitive against neighbouring local authorities and independent fostering providers. Rotherham Council are continuously improving our offer to foster carers.

- 2.20 As at the end of July 2025 there were 106 approved foster families, with 104 actives in house fostering placements. 73.8% of available in house foster placements were being utilised at the end of the reporting period July 2025.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 Not applicable.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 Not applicable.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 Not applicable.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial or procurement implications

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 There are no direct legal implications in this report.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no direct HR implications.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 There are no direct implications.

11. Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 There are no direct implications.

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 There are no direct implications.

13. Risks and Mitigation

Accountable Officer(s)

Stuart Williams, Assistant Director Children's Social Care
Helen Sweaton, Joint Assistant Director Commissioning, Policy, and Performance

Approvals obtained on behalf of:

	Name	Date
The Strategic Director with responsibility for this report	Name of Strategic Director	Click here to enter a date.
Consultation undertaken with the relevant Cabinet Member	Please select the relevant Cabinet Member	Click here to enter a date.

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