

<h1>BRIEFING</h1>	TO:	Improving Lives Select Commission
	DATE:	28 July 2020
	LEAD OFFICER:	Jenny Lingrell Assistant Director Commissioning, Performance and Inclusion 07554 436546
	TITLE:	ILSC Work Programme Progress Report: July 2020 Update on LAC Sufficiency Monitor progress and assess any impact on capacity due to COVID 19

1. Background

1.1	<p>The Rotherham Looked After Children (LAC) Sufficiency Strategy 2019-2022 identifies the challenges that the borough faces in relation to providing care and accommodation to our Looked After Children that is high quality, enables children to achieve the best outcomes and provides value for money. The Strategy was approved by Cabinet in June 2019 and Improving Lives Select Commission received a progress report in January 2020.</p> <p>The purpose of this report is to provide a further progress update and identify if Covid-19 has any impact on delivery.</p> <p>The key priorities identified in the LAC Sufficiency Strategy are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase the number of in-house foster carers. • To develop in-borough residential provision. • To maintain a clear understanding of sufficiency needs and value for money. • To explore opportunities for regional collaborative working arrangements. • To review the Rotherham Fostering Framework to ensure that it continues to deliver high quality placements and value for money. • To implement a Dynamic Purchasing Framework to achieve sufficiency for Rotherham care leavers. • To work in partnership with Adult Care & Housing to ensure that sufficiency is achieved for vulnerable 16- and 17-year olds.
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2. Key Issues

2.1	<p>In-House Foster Carers</p> <p>Rotherham's new fostering recruitment website and customer relationship management system was launched at the end of September 2019 and continues to generate interest in the Rotherham fostering offer. A fostering scorecard has been developed to show the number of initial information visits that are generated each month, and how these translate into numbers of prospective foster carers progressing through the assessment and approval process. Since the recruitment website was launched, 314 people have booked an initial information visit; the scorecard identifies some fluctuations in November and December due to technical issues, however, during Covid-19, these have held steady.</p>
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	The conversion rates from initial information visits to follow-up visits indicates that the quality of leads is as expected.
2.2	There has been some delay in progression of assessments through March, April and May linked to Covid-19. Usually the request to delay has come from the applicant; the service has worked to offer a blended assessment (virtual and minimal direct physical contact sessions) and ensue assessments progress. The team has also identified a solution to deliver Skills to Foster training via a virtual platform as this is a requirement for progressing the application and assessment process. On 2 June the first virtual Skills to Foster training programme commenced via Microsoft Teams for four prospective fostering households.
2.3	The Fostering Panel is continuing to meet virtually; 14 prospective foster carers are booked on to a panel between July and October. Two new foster carers were approved in June. Overall in the last financial year 17 new foster carer families were approved, representing 22 possible placements. However, this was outweighed by the number of de-registrations or conversions to Special Guardianship Order arrangements (which is positive). The trajectory for this financial year is that the number of new foster carers approved in 2020/21 will exceed performance last year, indicating that the strategy is beginning to gain momentum. The overall cohort of foster carers continues to grow in terms of quality and availability which is also a positive.
2.4	<p>IFA placements</p> <p>In April 2020, Rotherham re-joined the White Rose Fostering Framework. A needs and risk analysis indicated that there was a risk of the costs of placement increasing if Rotherham retained a stand-alone framework. The White Rose Framework has provided positive support whilst managing Covid-19 by challenging providers who approached individual local authorities to request an increase in fees.</p>
2.5	The commissioning team are also running workshops with existing independent fostering providers to explore the possibility of increasing capacity to offer step down fostering placements to young people who were previously in residential. This work will be completed within the current framework arrangements with White Rose fostering providers and will complement existing work with the National Fostering Agency Group (NFA).
2.6	Whilst there was very little impact on the fostering sector at the beginning of the COVID crisis, there is now an increase in disruptions in foster placements for young people with challenging behaviours. Regionally there is a perception that some foster carers are 'just hanging on' until lockdown arrangements ease; if this is the case there may be an increase in demand for looked after placements in the coming months.
2.7	<p>In-borough Residential Provision</p> <p>The strategy to increase residential provision in the borough through market shaping activities has led to an increase in local capacity of 16 places in the last 18 months. These placements allow children to retain local links and are less expensive than out of area private provision. Covid-19 has not had a negative impact on the development of new provision; it has however had a small impact on the speed of placement take up, as transitions have taken longer than usual.</p>

<p>2.8</p>	<p>In-house Residential Provision.</p> <p>Work to develop in-house residential provision run by RMBC is progressing during the COVID period. The business case was approved by Cabinet on 17 February 2020, identifying the opportunity to develop 16 new residential places through in-house provision, plus two registered emergency places. This in-house residential development will ensure more children and young people are placed in Rotherham close to their communities, families, friends and schools. It will also provide better outcomes for children and young people through the increased control and flexibility of the provision. Pegasus House was registered by Ofsted in July 2020; the staff team are in post and it is expected that children will move into the home ahead of schedule. The team will now work with Ofsted to register one of the emergency placements and to progress phase two of the strategy, which is to register two further two-bedded homes.</p> <p>The recruitment process and subsequent induction process for the residential team was delivered virtually, and, where face to face interactions were required this has been managed in line with social distancing guidance.</p>
<p>2.9</p>	<p>16+ Framework</p> <p>Rotherham's Flexible Purchasing System (FPS) for 16+ support and accommodation is now in the final stages, procurement have a small amount of due diligence to complete, conclusion letters will be issued to providers week commencing 20 July 2020. There was a positive response to the tender which was designed to increase sufficiency, choice and flexibility for 16+ young people in Rotherham. COVID did not impact on the tendering process.</p>
<p>2.10</p>	<p>Emergency Placements</p> <p>During the period since lockdown commenced there have been between three and eight children placed in emergency provision at any time. This number has fluctuated and, at the time of finalising this report there were seven children in emergency provision.</p> <p>The use of emergency placements is caused by placement breakdowns and emergency admissions into care. Covid-19 has made it more difficult to identify long-term placements for some children as quickly as is usually the case. Emergency placements are supported by robust planning for all children to mitigate risks with oversight from the Assistant Director for Safeguarding and the Director of Children's Services.</p>
<p>2.11</p>	<p>Placement Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of external residential placements has reduced by four this financial year, with a reduction of one in June. The residential numbers are currently just one above the budget profile. • The number of placements with in-house foster carers has increased by eight, with an increase of one in June. The target is a net increase of 47 in 2020/21, CYPS are currently forecasting 43 in this financial year. • The number of placements with IFA has increased by seven since 31 March, with a further increase of one in June, against a plan to reduce the number of IFA placements in this financial year. During the pandemic there have been new care admissions for a larger sibling group as well as demand for a mother and baby placement which have impacted on this profile. • The number of emergency placements has reduced from a high of 8 (mid-April) down to three in June but has now risen to seven again.

3. Key Actions and Timelines

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| 3.1 | Progress planning for all those children identified to move into in-borough and in-house residential places by September 2020; |
| 3.2 | Progress Ofsted registration for one emergency placement by September 2020. |
| 3.3 | Progress with implementation of phase two of the in-house residential strategy by February 2020. |
| 3.4 | Continue with foster carer recruitment strategy and performance (as set out in Appendix 1) |

4. Recommendations

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| 4.1 | <p>Improving Lives Select Commission are asked to note that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good progress is being made in the delivery of the LAC Sufficiency Strategy. The impact of COVID has been evident but has impacted on pace rather than preventing progress. Impetus has not been lost as a result of COVID.• There is a risk that demand for placements will increase as lockdown eases. |
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Appendix 1

Fostering Recruitment and Retention Activity and Placement Capacity Projections

Measure		Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Trend	2019 / 20	19/20 +/- %	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Trend	YTD	YTD +/- %		
In Recruitment	1.1 Number of information visits undertaken in month (Enquiries)	28	17	15	36	21	24		236		33	25	20							78		
	1.2 Number of follow up visits undertaken in month	7	10	7	4	12	16		82		14	8	8								30	
	1.3 New Assessments Started in month	0	1	6	5	5	8		47		4	1	0								5	
	1.4 Assessments at stage 1 (at month end)	13	14	11	14	18	21				25	25	18									
	1.5 Assessments at stage 2 (at month end)	5	5	2	2	2	4				2	2	3									
Approvals vs Dereg Net Increase	2.1 Number of new families approved in month	2	0	4	1	0	2		17		3	0	2								5	
	2.2 - Max number of placements for the new families	3	0	8	1	0	2		22		4	0	3								7	
	2.3 Number of families ceased fostering in month	0	1	5	1	1	1		21		0	1	0								1	
	2.4 - Max number of placements for the families who ceased	0	1	7	1	1	2		29		0	1	0								1	
	2.5 Actual net increase in new foster families	2	-1	-1	0	-1	1		-4		3	-1	2								4	
	2.6 - Actual net increase in max number of placements	3	-1	1	0	-1	0		-7		4	-1	3								6	
Fostering Capacity Projections	3.1 Projected new family approvals (based on numbers booked at panel)													3	3	3	5			14		
	3.2 - Projected max number of placements (based on numbers booked at panel)													4	4	3	10			21		
	3.3 Projected families ceasing fostering (based on average last 12 months)													1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6			6.4		
	3.4 - Projected max number of placements for ceasing families (based on average)													2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25			9		
	3.5 Projected net increase in foster families (approvals minus dereg)													1.4	1.4	1.4	3.4			7.6		
	3.6 - Projected net increase in placements (approvals minus dereg)													1.8	1.8	0.8	7.8			12.0		
	3.7 Total Projected net increase (actual + projections) in foster families in Yr																				11.6	7.9%
	3.8 -Total projected net increase (actual + projections) in placements in Yr																				18.0	7.4%
Placement Usage	4.1 Total LAC at month end	622	615	608	608	606	595			-30	605	604	601								-4	
	4.2 Number placed in-house fostering at month end (includes Reg 24 & Specific Child)	165	165	166	167	168	170			3	180	178	178									-2
	4.3 Number placed external fostering at month end	262	255	261	264	259	251			-3	253	256	257									4
	NEW Number placed in Reg 38(6) placements	18	16	10	11	11	12				10	11	11									1
	4.4 - % of all LAC that were in an in house foster placement at month end	26.5%	26.8%	27.3%	27.5%	27.7%	28.6%			1.9%	29.8%	29.5%	29.6%									-0.3%
	4.5 - % of all LAC that were in an External foster placement at month end	42.1%	41.5%	42.9%	43.4%	42.7%	42.2%			1.5%	41.8%	42.4%	42.8%									0.6%
4.6 - % of all LAC that were in other placement types at month end	31.4%	31.7%	29.8%	29.1%	29.5%	29.2%			-3.4%	28.4%	28.1%	27.6%									-0.3%	

*Families refers to new fostering households approved

**Placements refers to the maximum number of children allowed at 1 time

***Note that panels are booked in to take place virtually due to COVID-19 and will be reviewed regularly.