

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Improving Lives Select Commission – 05 December 2023

Report Title

Improving Lives Select Commission – Looked After Children’s Sufficiency Strategy progress 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, Children & Young Peoples Service

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

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

1. Members of the Improving Lives Select Committee note progress made against the delivery plan for the Looked After Children’s Sufficiency Strategy.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Residential Update

Background Papers

Looked After Children's Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2027

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Improving Lives Select Commission – Looked After Children’s Sufficiency Strategy progress update.

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.
- 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.

Our priority areas over the next three years are:

- 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.

1.5 Key objectives of the Strategy are supported by a delivery plan which identifies actions and outcome measures. Key highlights from the delivery plan over the last 12 months are included in section 2

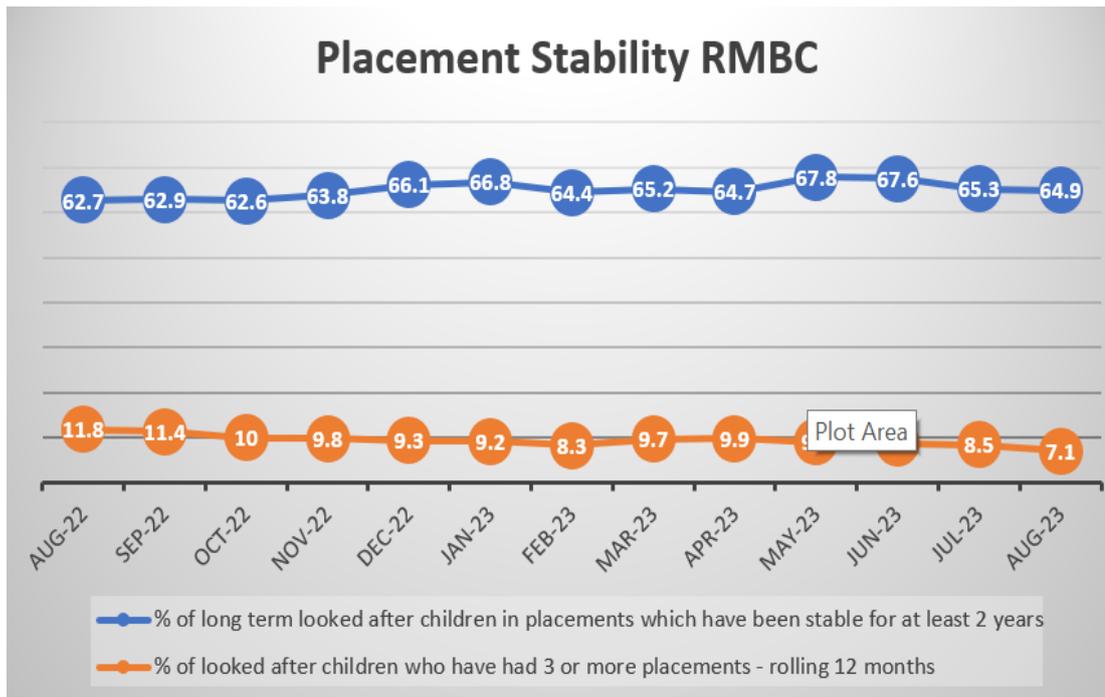
2. Key Issues

2.1 As of October 2023, there are 514 young people in care in Rotherham, over a 12-month trend this has reduced from 554 young people. A breakdown of our Children in Care and Care Leaver cohort by placement type is given below:

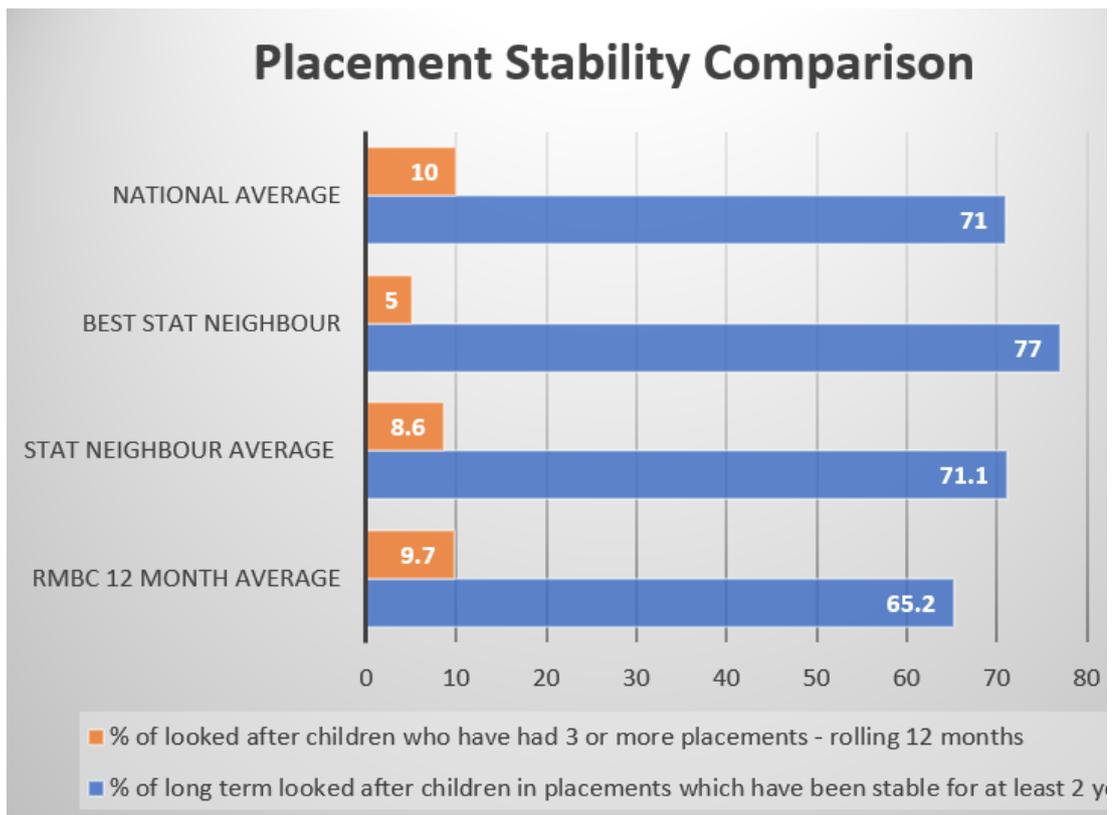
- There are 514 young people in care.
- 39% of children in our care are cared for in RMBC provision.
- 10% of children in care are placed in residential (47) unregulated (7) or secure (2) placements.
- 120 (23.3%) of children in care are currently living with in house foster carers
- 214 (41.6%) of children in care are currently in Independent Fostering placements
- 54 (10.5%) of children in care are living with parents or connected carers
- There are currently 322 Care Leavers open to the service, 197 of these young people are over 18 years old.
- 27% of our Care Leavers are living independently.
- 7.9% of our Care leavers have remained in staying put arrangements post 18.
- 9.5% of our Care Leavers are living with parents or family members

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 There has been a reduction in almost 5% of children in care who have had 3 or more placement moves over the last 12 months from 11.8% to 7.1%. This is significantly lower than the national average of 10% and only 2% higher than the best statistical neighbour.



2.4



2.5 Increasing local sufficiency is supported by transformation work across in house programme particularly on our fostering and residential programme.

2.6 The in-house Residential Children’s Home programme is currently in phase 3 and 4 following approval at Cabinet in November 2022. The phases will see

the development of 6, 2 bed children's homes creating 12 placements, running until April 2025.

- 2.7 There are delays to delivery of the Children's Home programme. The initial programme plan indicated all phase 1-3 children's homes should now be operational (see Appendix 1). Delays are because of challenges in identifying appropriate properties, recruiting staff and registration with Ofsted within the timeframes allocated. The target dates have been revised.
- 2.8 In 2023/24 Dragon Fly House has been successfully operationalised, with a second property being recently purchased which is awaiting appropriate registration with Ofsted.
- 2.9 Phase 4 is supported by 50% match funding from the Department for Education's Open Children's Home programme. As part of this a new build property has been identified, this will support with developing in house provision which is able to support a wider level of complex need. The home has passed through planning and is scheduled to become operational in Summer 2024.
- 2.10 The in-house residential homes provide a variety of residential placement types to ensure the needs of children under varying circumstances can be met, this includes step down children's homes, 2 bed and solo provisions.
- 2.11 Key developments across the in-house programme has been the development of a short-break hub linked to Liberty House. This has been developed following a successful application to the Department for Education's Short Breaks Innovation Fund. The grant is supporting 12 young people through an intensive short-break offer linking home, school and the community with the aim of ensuring young people are able to maintain education, have access to a sustainable short-break and avoid potential care entry.

2.12 **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.

- 2.13 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.
- 2.14 As of 31/09/23 there were 108 foster families caring for 120 children. Since April 2023 8 new foster carers have been recruited with a projection of an additional 12 carers to be recruited by the end of the year, this will mean a

net increase of 8 carers this financial year. This will create an extra 15 beds for children requiring a foster placement in Rotherham.

2.15 Promote the Rotherham Family Approach to Commissioned Services through a Quality Assurance Framework.

CYPS commissioning promote the Rotherham Family Approach in the first instance. The **'Rotherham Family Approach'**, encapsulates working restoratively with our families, using Signs of Safety as a way of managing risk effectively, informed by respectful, collaborative relationships that enable working with families to support them to be resilient and successful. Only when all family-based provisions are exhausted are alternative provisions considered. 83% of commissioned placements for children in care (excluding semi-independent provision) are within a family-based setting.

2.16 All commissioned services are subject to regular oversight and monitoring through the commissioning quality assurance framework; this includes assurance against placement provision across fostering, residential, 16+ along with a range of commissioned service contracts.

2.17 Quality Assurance work is timetabled on a regular basis and takes place in response to any concerns raised on an individual placement or provider level. Concerns are managed via contracts concerns process managed by CYPS commissioning with a view to commissioning social care placements which are compliant and achieve best value in terms of outcome and cost.

2.18 Commissioning work collaboratively with external residential and fostering providers to produce and monitor actions plans in response to 'less than good' Ofsted Inspection.

2.19 Currently 100% of all commissioned independent fostering agencies family-based settings were rated has good or outstanding as at the end of September 2023

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 Not applicable the report is for information purposes only.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 The development of the revised Strategy involved collaborative working across Rotherham, including Children in Care and Care Leavers, First Response, Locality Social Work, Commissioning, Performance, Early Help, Legal Services and Finance.

4.2 Further engagement 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 Children in Care Council.

4.3 The input from Improving Lives Select Commission will be valued. This will inform further implementation of the strategy.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 Not applicable the report is for information purposes only.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

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.

6.2 CYPS set a placement budget based on the reduction of a net 16 Children in Care children within the 2023/234 financial year (545 to 529). Current Children in Care numbers in October 2023 are 514. The reduction is ahead of the October profile (533) by 19 and the March 2024 profile (529) by 15.

6.3 Whilst placement numbers are ahead of profile the placement mix is creating a significant budget pressure with higher than projected numbers placed in external residential placements.

6.4 The key strategies of in house residential and in house fostering placement are at the core of the financial budget profile.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 Not applicable as this report is for information purposes only.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no HR implications identified within the report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

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.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 Not applicable as this report is for information purposes only.

11. Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 Not applicable as this report is for information purposes only.

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 Not applicable as this report is for information purposes only.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 Progress against delivery of the Strategy is monitored through the CYPS Directorate Leadership Team with regular reporting to the CYPS Performance and Transformation Board.

13.2 To support with operational management the Children in Care Sufficiency Board meets on a monthly basis to identify progress against the strategy along with identifying and mitigating against ongoing risks and issues.

13.3 The ongoing main risks identified against successful delivery of the Looked After Children Sufficiency Strategy are a short fall in externally commissioned placements due to high demand nationally, this in turn creates additional financial pressures when securing placements. This risk is mitigated in part through the continued development of the in house offer across both fostering and residential services.

13.4 A further identified main risk is the challenges faced on a national level recruiting both Foster Carers and Residential Children's home staff. Mitigations linked to recruitment are supported by the increased focus on digital and place-based marketing along with regular reviews of the Rotherham offer for both foster carers and residential staff workforce. Both areas are supported as part of the council wide Workforce Development Plan.

Accountable Officer(s)

Helen Sweaton – Joint Assistant Director, Commissioning, Performance & Quality

Approvals obtained on behalf of:

| | Name | Date |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| Chief Executive | | Click here to enter a date. |
| Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer) | Named officer | Click here to enter a date. |
| Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer) | Named officer | Click here to enter a date. |
| Assistant Director of Human Resources (if appropriate) | | Click here to enter a date. |
| Head of Human Resources (If appropriate) | | Click here to enter a date. |
| The Strategic Director with responsibility for this report | Nicola Curley – Strategic Director, | 08/11/23 |

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| | Children & Young Peoples Services | |
| Consultation undertaken with the relevant Cabinet Member | Cabinet Member for Children and Young People - Councillor Cusworth | 14/11/23 |

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