

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD – 21 NOVEMBER 2016

Title of paper:	Children in Care Placements – Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy 2016-2018		
Director(s)/ Corporate Director(s):	Katy Ball – Director, Children’s Procurement & Children’s Commissioning	Wards affected:	All
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Other colleagues who have provided input:			
Date of consultation with Portfolio Holder(s) (if relevant)			
Relevant Council Plan Key Theme:			
Strategic Regeneration and Development			<input type="checkbox"/>
Schools			<input type="checkbox"/>
Planning and Housing			<input type="checkbox"/>
Community Services			<input type="checkbox"/>
Energy, Sustainability and Customer			<input type="checkbox"/>
Jobs, Growth and Transport			<input type="checkbox"/>
Adults, Health and Community Sector			<input type="checkbox"/>
Children, Early Intervention and Early Years			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Leisure and Culture			<input type="checkbox"/>
Resources and Neighbourhood Regeneration			<input type="checkbox"/>
Summary of issues (including benefits to citizens/service users):			
This report provides an overview of placement issues for children in care.			
Recommendation(s):			
1	To note the contents of the report.		

1 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 This report provides an update from the Nottingham City Council Placement Service inclusive of children in care data, performance, commissioning priorities and developments with external providers.

2 BACKGROUND (INCLUDING OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION)

Update On Placements

- 2.1 As of the 11th October 2016, there were 603 children in care, the majority of whom are placed with Foster Carers (77%, 465) of which 191 are placed with internal Foster Carers. All placement searches begin with rigorous enquiries for appropriate internal foster placements prior to offering the search to Independent Fostering Agencies. Likewise all requests for placements with Residential Services begin by liaising with NCC Residential Services. As with fostering, external searches are conducted only when there are no vacancies or appropriate matches within internal services. On 11th October, 65% (393) of the total 603 children in care were placed in external provision, 274 of whom were placed with Independent Fostering Agencies. The number of children in external residential and semi-independent provisions has remained relatively stable this financial year, currently 50 and 44 respectively.
- 2.2 On 11th October 2016 83.9% of children were placed within 20 miles of Nottingham City.
- 2.3 The Placement Team works closely with colleagues in Nottingham City Council's internal Fostering Service and Residential Services to ensure positive working relationships and effective business processes. In particular, there has been development in relation to the internal Fostering Service to ensure processes are aligned and we maximise the use of internal foster placements.
- 2.4 We have maintained a focus on placing children in foster care where possible and appropriate, which has resulted in a decline in the number of children placed in external residential placements.
- 2.5 The vacant role of Lead Placement Officer – Contracts & Market Development was filled in July 2016. There have also been changes to personnel and the management structure of the service.

Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy

- 2.6 All Local Authorities have a statutory duty to ensure sufficient accommodation for its Looked After Children and Young People. This is referred to as the 'Sufficiency Duty' as laid down in Section 22G of the Children Act 1989. This duty should be undertaken within the context of the planning and co-operation duties, which the 2004 Act places on partners in order to improve the wellbeing of the children in the local area.
- 2.7 Nottingham City Council's Placement Service takes responsibility for publishing the Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy and reviewing it on an annual basis, working closely with Social Care to ensure business priorities are aligned. This strategy determines the way in which Children in Care (CiC) placements are commissioned, informed by current and anticipated sufficiency requirements. The Strategy lays out the City's vision and commitment to all children and young people requiring a care placement and details the minimum standards, commissioning plans and accelerated strands for the placement market.
- 2.8 A new Children in Care Placements Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy has been published for 2016 – 2018, with an associated action plan.

2.9 The strategy is included within Appendix 1 (9.3).

Commissioning Priorities

2.10 The current priorities for development of placement services for children in care are as follows:

- Increase the number of Nottingham City Foster Carers (2016 / 17).
- Ensure there is on-going consideration of creative packages of care as an alternative to residential placements (2016 / 18).
- Work with local Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) to ensure sufficient, quality local care to offer choice and value for money (2016 / 18).
- Consider the implementation of Multi-Dimensional Foster Care Treatment (2017 / 18).
- Supporting complex and challenging children to remain in family settings, through the development or commissioning of specialist foster placements and consideration of the development of a multi-agency team to support Foster Carers (2017/18).
- Lead regional collaboration to redesign solutions to meet the placement needs of the most complex children and young people across the East Midlands, linking to the DfE Innovation Fund & Social Investment Platform (2016/17).
- Develop a broader understanding of placement stability across residential and foster care placements to inform requirements within the market (2016 / 17).
- Support the ACDS Pilot for commissioning welfare secure placements, working with Hampshire County Council and regional / national Local Authorities. (2016 /17).
- Implement a local semi-independent framework for 16 – 18 year old Care Leavers to ensure they are accommodated and supported, enabling a positive transition to adulthood (2016 /17).
- Continue to manage the current residential contract to ensure children and young people are placed in local provision that is of high quality and represents value for money (2016 / 17).
- Consider the development of additional internal residential care for children and young people with complex needs (2016 / 17).
- Continue to work with partners in health to commission and fund appropriate placements for children in care who have complex health needs (2016 / 17).
- Support the regional development of a Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) for children & young people with the most complex needs (2016 / 17).
- Regular review of high cost placements (2016 / 18).

East Midlands Regional Children's Framework

- 2.11 The East Midlands Regional Framework was recommissioned in February 2016 for a further 4 year period. A robust evaluation process was undertaken before providers were accepted onto the framework, to ensure both quality and value for money.
- 2.12 Northamptonshire County Council manages the regional framework on behalf of the other Local Authorities, providing a contract management function and analysis of use, costs, standards of provision and outcomes for children and young people. The cost of this is shared between the Local Authorities who are part of the consortium and is based on the number of placements each Authority makes.
- 2.13 Work is planned during the year to understand where children and young people are placed across the region so we can work across Local Authorities and with providers to place children within Local Authority areas, or within 20 miles where possible.

Residential Care Contract

- 2.14 In April 2015 Homes2Inspire was awarded a block contract for ten placements within residential children's homes over a maximum length of 10 years.
- 2.15 At the end of September 2016, 9 young people had placements through the contract, all but 2 of whom are in children's homes that were judged by Ofsted to be either Good or Outstanding. Those two young people reside in a home that was assessed in April of this year as requiring improvement. The home received this evaluation because it was the home's first inspection, it required a period of stability under strong management, there was a need identified for additional safeguarding training, as well as improvements to care planning. Quality of provision is central to the contract and is monitored through an Outcomes Framework, regular performance management, contract monitoring meetings and positive partnership working. Through these mechanisms we have satisfied ourselves that the issues raised by the 'requires improvement' judgement have been addressed, and that we have visibility on the specific issues raised – the home has a full complement of permanent staff including manager, and an on-going programme of supervision and training.
- 2.16 Since April 2016 there have been on average 8 placements current in any one month with the exception of June 2016 (only 6 placements were active) which saw an unusual drop in incoming requirements for residential care, combined with some existing placements ending.
- 2.17 The contract is also anticipated to achieve a reduction in Local Authority spend on residential care, as well as increased placement stability and increased ability to place children within Nottingham. There were issues in the first year of implementation due to the challenge of opening new homes across the county, which has been on-going to date. This has impacted on our ability to place children due to matching issues but savings identified for the first year of implementation were achieved and a new five-bed home has recently been opened in the City.

Semi Independent Framework

2.18 During 2016, we have undertaken a procurement exercise to develop a new semi-independent framework and consideration of a block contract for this cohort. Unfortunately this did not result in any contracts being awarded, and we are currently considering our position in relation to this.

3 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED IN MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 This is an update report to Committee – therefore no other options were considered.

4 FINANCE COMMENTS (INCLUDING IMPLICATIONS AND VALUE FOR MONEY/VAT)

4.1 Savings identified from the Residential Care Contract will be considered within the commissioning priorities. These are managed through the Big Ticket process.

5 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT COMMENTS (INCLUDING RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES, AND LEGAL, CRIME AND DISORDER ACT AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS)

5.1 Risk management processes will be undertaken prior to commencing any procurement or commissioning activity. There are no legal or Crime and Disorder Act implications at this stage. Any future procurement and commissioning activity will comply with EU Procurement Legislation and guidance will be sought through the relevant Legal and HR channels.

6 STRATEGIC ASSETS & PROPERTY COMMENTS (FOR DECISION RELATING TO ALL PROPERTY ASSETS AND ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE) (AREA COMMITTEE REPORTS ONLY)

6.1 None.

7 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 Has the equality impact of the proposals in this report been assessed?

No



An EIA is not required because:

(Please explain why an EIA is not necessary)

An EIA is not required at this time as the report does not contain proposals or financial decisions.

8 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS OTHER THAN PUBLISHED WORKS OR THOSE DISCLOSING CONFIDENTIAL OR EXEMPT INFORMATION

8.1 None.

9 PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT

9.1 Nottingham City Council's Children and Young People's Plan.

9.2 Nottingham City Council Plan.

9.3 Children in Care Placements - Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy 2016 – 2018