

Decision Maker: CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND FAMILIES POLICY
DEVELOPMENT AND SCUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: 17th November 2022

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

Title: CHILDREN'S LOOKED AFTER PLACEMENT SUFFICIENCY AND
COMMISSIONING STRATEGY 2022-2024

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Chief Officer: Richard Baldwin, Director of Children's Services

Ward: All Wards

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report presents the Children's Looked After Placement Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy 2022 - 2024 (see Appendix 1).
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2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 That the Children, Education and Families PDS Committee notes the report.

Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: To ensure the London Borough of Bromley fulfils its sufficiency duty in supplying quality placements for our Children Looked After.
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Transformation Policy

1. Policy Status: Not Applicable:
 2. Making Bromley Even Better Priority:
 - (1) For children and young People to grow up, thrive and have the best life chances in families who flourish and are happy to call Bromley home.
 - (5) To manage our resources well, providing value for money, and efficient and effective services for Bromley's residents.Not Applicable: Further Details
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: No Cost:
 2. Ongoing costs: Not Applicable:
 3. Budget head/performance centre: N/A
 4. Total current budget for this head: £N/A
 5. Source of funding: N/A
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Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional): N/A
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: N/A
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory Requirement:
 2. Call-in: Not Applicable: No Executive decision.
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Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: N/A
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Property

1. Summary of Property Implications: N/A
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Carbon Reduction and Social Value

1. Summary of Carbon Reduction/Sustainability Implications: N/A
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users or customers (current and projected): Our Children Looked After population.
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: N/A

3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 The purpose of this report is to set out Bromley's Sufficiency Strategy for the next two years. The strategy can be viewed at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 The Bromley Children Looked After Placement and Fostering Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy presents how the Council intends to meet its 'Sufficiency Duty' set out in Section 22G of the Children Act 1989, 'to take steps to secure, as far as reasonably practicable sufficient accommodation for looked after children within their local authority area'.
- 3.3 As a Corporate Parent it is our responsibility to ensure that children and young people in our care are safe, have positive experiences and achieve the best possible outcomes in their future lives.
- 3.4 Through this strategy we are committing to:

Ensuring that children only come into care where this is in their best interests. If they do come into care, children should without delay achieve timely and appropriate reunification with their families, or alternative permanency.

When children need to remain in care, providing and commissioning the right mix or "menu" of high-quality placements and effective wrap around support to meet identified needs of children looked after and care leavers as cost effectively as possible.

Placements will always be sought through our In-house fostering network, as a first preference, prior to considering services from external providers which includes: residential homes, agency foster placements and supported accommodation.

We will further grow our In-House Fostering capacity by delivering effective recruitment and retention strategies and increasing the capability of internal fostering to deliver more complex support.

Our focus will remain on quality, ensuring interventions lead to a de-escalation of needs and placement stability resulting in improved outcomes for children and young people through strengthened: matching processes; placement planning; quality assurance processes; improving support available for carers and professional development opportunities for foster carers.

We will ensure our commissioning is needs-led, with robust procurement and contracting. We will continue to commission through a range of mechanisms to ensure availability, quality and best value services. We will continue to participate and develop more London (and sub regional) block contracts and provider frameworks where economies of scale can be evidenced and quality sustained. We are also committed to developing our placement service to better utilise and negotiate our 'menu of placement options'.

We will work directly with the Children in Care Council (LinCC) and our network for Care Leavers when undertaking commissioning or development activity to ensure that the views of our children are central to decision making. We will seek views from Social Workers and Independent Reviewing Officers to understand the individual needs, wishes and feelings of children and young people when sourcing individual placements.

We will ensure that our current and forecasted position of placement needs influences the Councils budget setting processes, including forecasts of inflation, rates of looked after children and their respective placement needs.

We will support young people in care to make a successful transition into adulthood through the provision of high quality leaving care services which support care leavers to find and maintain suitable accommodation arrangements that meet their needs and provide them with independent living skills.

- 3.5 The actions at the end of the strategy will be inputted into an action plan in order to monitor the performance of the strategy.

12. PROCUREMENT RULES

- 12.1 There are no Corporate Procurement implications.

13. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 13.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However the strategy feeds into the Medium Term Financial Strategy and guides future financial decisions in terms of spending levels.

15. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 15.1 Section 22G of the Children Act 1989 requires local authorities to take strategic action in respect of those children they look after and for whom it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation within their local authority area. In those circumstances, section 22G requires local authorities, so far as is reasonably practicable, to ensure that there is sufficient accommodation for those children that meets their needs and is within their local authority area ('the Sufficiency Duty').
- 15.2 A local authority has a duty, under section 10 of the Children Act ('the 2004 Act') to decide to promote co-operation with its relevant partners with a view to improving the wellbeing of children in the authority's area. The Sufficiency Duty can be implemented through a partnership between the authority and its partners under 2004 Act.
- 15.3 The Secretary of State has made the 'Sufficiency: Statutory Guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for looked after children' in 2010 under section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970, which requires local authorities, in the exercise of their social services functions, to act under the general guidance of the Secretary of State; and under section 10 (8) of the 2004 Act, which requires all local authorities and each of their relevant partners to have regard to guidance when exercising their functions in relation to their duty to co-operate to improve the wellbeing of children in the local area.
- 15.4 This report is asking the Children, Education and Families Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee to note Bromley's Sufficiency Strategy for the next two years made by the Director of Children, Education and Families as set out in Appendix 1.
- 15.5 At Part 3 of the Council's Constitution (Responsibility for Functions) sets out the 'Functions to be exercised by the Full Executive' and confirms that all other Executive decisions not delegated to Chief Officers under the Scheme of Delegations to Chief officers shall be taken by the relevant Portfolio Holder.
- 15.6 Under the Council's Scheme of Delegation to Officers paragraph 2.9 provides that in all cases where the exercise of executive functions is not specifically reserved to the Executive, those functions are deemed to be delegated to the Chief Executive and the Chief Officer with responsibility for the relevant function.

15.7 Under paragraph 12.2 (b) and (c) of the Council’s Scheme of Delegation to Officers : ‘Functions delegated to the Director of Children, Education and Families’ ,the Director is responsible for (b) the Council’s functions as set out in the Children Act 2004, in particular, building and leading the arrangements for inter-agency co-operation (c) for Children Looked after, Children in need, child protection, adoption, fostering, education and special educational needs.

Non-Applicable Headings:	Market Considerations; Social Value; Stakeholder Engagement; Procurement and Project Timescales; Impact Assessments; Transformation/policy implications; IT and GDPR considerations; Strategic Property considerations; Personnel considerations; Ward Councillor Views
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	[Title of document and date]