

APPENDIX 1

Sufficiency Strategy for Looked After Children

2017-2020

Corporate Parenting Committee Briefing Paper

10 July 2017

Introduction

The 2014-2017 Placement and Sufficiency Strategy for Looked After Children is coming to an end and therefore a strategy refresh is required to ensure that Southwark Council fulfils its statutory obligations to:

- Ensure the adequate supply of high quality accommodation and support;
- Meet the needs of, and improve the outcomes for looked after children, young people, and children on the edge of care.

The sufficiency duty requires that each Local Authority providing children's services, must:

“take steps to secure, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within the local authority's area which meets the needs of children that the local authority are looking after, and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation that is in the local authority's area.”

The Sufficiency Guidance, published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families in 2010, describes the necessity for Local Authorities to make the “right placement in the right place at the right time.”

The Strategy will be written with regard to the Children Act 1989 and in particular, Section 22G of the Act, the ‘Sufficiency Duty,’ in accordance with the Children Leaving Care Act 2000, the Housing Act 1996, and the Sufficiency: Statutory Guidance on Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children (2010).

The strategy will also reflect the ambitions set out in the *Southwark Five Year Forward View* (FYFV) for health and social care 2016-21 which focusses on population and placed based commissioning, whole-system value and *how* care is delivered. The strategy will also align with the Joint Strategic Framework for CYP which sets out the CCG and Council's shared priorities for CYP (including early years and 0-5 school readiness, emotional wellbeing and mental health, admission avoidance and crisis planning, vulnerable groups and risky behaviours), as well as Southwark Council's Children and Young People's Plan (including outcomes associated with early help, choice and control, safety and stability).

The key emerging key themes and priorities include:

1. Prevention;
2. Fostering (all ages);
3. Residential Placements (Children's homes ages 5-25);

4. +16 years old – preparing for independent living.

A suggested working vision for Corporate Parenting Committee is:

“Our vision is to ensure that Southwark has a strong preventative approach to ensuring sufficient high quality placements and accommodation options that meet the needs of all looked after children and care leavers, safeguarding them from harm and supporting them in achieving the best possible outcomes whilst ensuring the best use of available resources.”

Aim

This briefing aims to provide a high level summary of work that has already been carried out by Southwark Council to deliver high quality and safe places for Looked After Children (LAC) and sets out key priorities going forward for the 2017-2020 Placement and Sufficiency Strategy.

The briefing also includes a workplan which outlines suggested timescales for completion of the strategy and implementation.

Ofsted

An inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers took place in Southwark from 6 March 2017 to 30 March 2017. Overall, Children’s services in Southwark are good, however some services for achieving permanence for looked after children and experiences and progress of care leavers require improvement.

The strategy will build on some of the key successes highlighted by Ofsted such as, diversity when matching placements for children and young people, joint pathways between housing and social care and the outstanding graded judgement for adoption performance. It will also address areas requiring improvement and how the Council, in partnership with health and the third and voluntary sector will implement the necessary improvements.

Emerging Key Themes and Priorities

1. Prevention

Both nationally and locally there has been a significant reduction in the numbers of Looked after Children (LAC) over the last 5 years, specifically in the under 13 age group. Due to the work of the Council, there have been particular successes in reducing the numbers of LAC (approximately 250 at end 2016/17 from 579 in July 2013).

Children’s Social Care teams in Southwark have successfully focussed on preventative interventions such as family support, family group conferencing and safely enabling children to remain with their families and/or grandparents where this is right for the child or young person. Trends in local data suggest there is a need to place a greater emphasis on the 13+ age group where there are larger numbers of children in LAC placements with a range of complex needs including risky behaviours, possible substance misuse and/or homelessness.

Considerations include the National shortage of foster carers. Because more children are coming into care, the demand for foster placements is rising and recruitment is not at a pace to meet this demand. Additionally, more children are coming into care with more complex needs.

The Council also recognises that there has been an increase in the number of late entrants into care (15+) who can be challenging to place appropriately.

Emerging Priorities

- Continue to reduce the numbers of LAC in Southwark through successful implementation of preventative approaches;
- Build on the work of the Southwark's *Families Matter (Early Help) Strategy*, 2015-2020 to build resilience and support family networks in the community and to prevent escalation of difficulties;
- Review preventative approaches (family group conferencing, Early Help and Specialist Family Focus) to develop a shared preventative model for Southwark;
- Increased focus on whole-system approaches to commissioning across social care and health including CAMHS Carelink, GSTT LAC and the integrated YP's wellbeing service.

2. Fostering and Permanency (all ages)

Southwark Council commissions a combination of in-house and Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) Spend for 2015/16 across ALL Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) was approximately £6.3m with £5m spent on young people aged 0-15 years.

There is a national drive to move towards block contracted arrangements with fixed prices (currently between £780-950 per week). The local IFA Framework comes to an end on 15 October 2017. There are three options for Southwark going forward including:

1. Development of a new Southwark Framework;
2. Buy into the London Care Services and London Care Placements (LCP) London Councils Framework which is currently operating across the 33 boroughs costing (£9k in 2016/17);
3. Furthering discussions with Croydon Council and other South London boroughs on development of a Dynamic Purchasing System / Sub-Regional Commissioning Proposal for Residential Care and Fostering which could yield collective influence.

Emerging Priorities

- Obtain the best fostering option in terms of quality and cost, and to attract good quality foster carers with particular emphasis on the older age cohort of children who require placements in the right locations;
- Support more young people to stay in foster care in line with Staying Put;
- Support children and young people to enter into permanent adoption arrangements;
- Explore options for high level support to enable more Southwark residents to provide in-house fostering services.

3. Residential Placements (Children's homes ages 5-25)

In 2016, the Council's commissioning team undertook a scoping exercise to consider the current landscape and issues around residential placements made for Looked After Children (LAC) in LB Southwark. During the financial year 2015/2016 61 young people were being supported in residential care placements.

A summary of the findings included greater levels of residential care (higher cost) are required when foster care breaks down due to complex challenging behaviours; lack of in borough residential provision and wide geographical spread of residential placements.

Emerging Priorities

- The priority should be to place children and young people in the most appropriate placement in the right location depending on their circumstances. This might include considering the need for in-borough residential provision.
- Southwark should build on the nursing post that has been established to ensure that children and young people, who are placed appropriately out of borough, receive health assessments and follow up.
- Continued prevention is a priority in terms of joint working across youth offending; keeping families together, care teams, assessment and intervention, LD and complex needs teams to support foster carers to manage challenging behaviours in order that the additional pressures on residential care are eased.
- Ensure best value for money and sufficiency through commissioning block contracts where possible.

4. +16 years old – preparing for independent living

The recommendations of a detailed Cabinet report were agreed on 9 May 2017. The report focusses on transforming support and housing for looked after children/care leavers and young people in Southwark at risk of homelessness aged over 16 years old – preparing for independent living.

The report stated that “the move to independent living is a formative time in many young people's lives. It is a time when many young people finish their education, take up employment and begin to pay rent and other bills in what may be their first home away from their families and foster carers.”

The recommendations for 16+ were:

1. Establish a joint leadership approach across the total 16+ support and housing pathway, this will be underpinned by a commonality of purpose across care, health, housing and support;
2. Support young people to, where it is safe, suitable and healthy to do so, to stay living at home with their own family or foster carer;
3. Establish a “one front door” into 16+ support and housing services for all looked after children/care leavers and young people at risk of homelessness, underpinned by a single approach across children's social care and housing;

4. Establish new Southwark Young People's 16+ Support and Resettlement Services - shifting to a small number of providers delivering support options around preparing young people for independent living, training flats, resettlement and wellbeing. Some of these services will be located within the borders of Southwark and other services will be located within a reasonable travel distance of the borough;
5. Establish a total-system young people's move on and resettlement scheme, helping to enable young people, when ready, to move on from services. This approach will be underpinned by a principle of helping young people to make their own choices around their housing needs;
6. Ensure that young people are supported to live independently in the community after a time in services, with no "cliff-edge" when leaving different support and housing schemes.

Emerging Priorities

- Deliver the recommendations of the Southwark young people aged over 16 year's old support and housing Project (2017). The provider Forum is meeting on 15 June 2017.
- Work in partnership with the Council's Housing and Residency services to ensure affordable housing options for children and young people, consider the impact of welfare reforms on young people and to ensure safe and suitable accommodation options for 18+ care leavers.

Work plan

	<i>What needs to happen?</i>	<i>By when?</i>	<i>Who?</i>
1	Establish the governance routes (CAB, Commissioning Development Group)	Before end June	Sophie Gray
2	Engagement with key stakeholders (individual meetings)	June-July	Sophie Gray
3	Briefing Paper is received by Corporate Parenting Committee – Agenda Planning Meeting	13 June	Rachel Flagg / Sophie Gray
4	Review the current workplan within the existing 2014-2017 Placement and Sufficiency Strategy and consider what has worked well and what areas require further progress. This includes incorporating and implementing the recommendations of the 16+ project.	June/July	Sophie Gray
5	Update and finalise needs analysis building on the LAC scoping exercise, 16+ housing project, JSNA, Children and Young People's Health Partnership work etc.	June/July	Sophie Gray / Children's Social Care / Public Health
6	Benchmark with other 'good' Ofsted	June/July	Sophie Gray

	boroughs.		
7	Briefing Paper is received by Corporate Parenting Committee – Agenda Planning Meeting	10 July	Rachel Flagg / Sophie Gray
8	Incorporate feedback from Corporate Parenting July meeting to ensure the strategy fulfils its overarching purpose and vision.	July	Sophie Gray
9	Individual meetings being held with key stakeholders to develop the draft strategy.	June-August	Sophie Gray
10	Strategy Reference Group will meet to discuss the draft strategy.	August	Sophie Gray
11	Continue to pursue discussions with other south London boroughs around collaboration in commissioning of residential and fostering	July-September	Alisdair Smith / Genette Laws / Rachel Flagg
12	Discussion at CYP Commissioning Development Group (CDG)	September/October	Sophie Gray
13	Director sign off prior to Committees	October	Sophie Gray / Rachel Flagg
14	Final draft strategy is received by the Corporate Parenting Committee, Children's DMT, CAB.	November	Rachel Flagg / Sophie Gray
15	Oversee and drive implementation of final strategy with regular check point meetings to monitor performance and outcomes.	Dec 2017 - March 2020.	Commissioning in collaboration with Children's Social Care.

Sophie Gray

21 June 2017