

<b>Item No.</b> 9.	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 1 March 2023	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Corporate Parenting Committee
<b>Report title:</b>		Children Looked After and Care Leaver Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2026	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>From:</b>		Director of Commissioning, Children's and Adults' Services	

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Corporate Parenting Committee note the Children in Care and Care Leavers Placement Sufficiency Strategy as set out in Appendix One.
2. That the Corporate Parenting Committee provide comments to the Children in Care and Care Leavers Placement Sufficiency Strategy.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. The Council has a duty under the Children Act 1989 (Section 22) to provide sufficient placements within the local authority's area, so far as is reasonably practical, to meet the accommodation needs of our children looked after and care leavers.
4. This Strategy has been developed as part of our statutory duty to ensure sufficiency of placements for children and young people in our care. It pulls together the available data and recent analyses in one place to identify themes and trends that enables us to identify gaps in our provision and informs our priorities for the upcoming period.
5. This Strategy covers the period 2023-2026 and builds on the work completed in the current Strategy that ends this year.

## KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

6. The number of children in care is reducing from its peak of 489 in 2017 and current projections show that this is expected to continue. Current data shows that there has been a drop from 76 to 68 per 10,000 children under 18 and whilst still higher than comparators we are narrowing the gap.
7. 82% of children looked after are aged over 10 years old making the development of care placements for this cohort, including provision for unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people, a key focus of the strategy.

8. Nationally approximately 21% of children looked after are placed further than 20 miles from their home. Although Southwark has a higher rate of children placed at a distance to comparators at 23% it has undertaken a significant amount of work to address the situation. This includes the development of a Residential Strategy as the proportion of those placed over 20 miles away from home in residential provision is significantly higher than when compared with all children who are looked after (60% of children in residential provision).
9. Southwark has shown a strong and consistent trend in improving the percentage of children in long term stable placements over the last four years from 62% to 71% and when compared to other Inner London Boroughs, Southwark has narrowed the gap.
10. The strategy sets out a range of data and trends and from the analysis of this we have identified further work is needed in the following areas as set out in full in the strategy:
  - (i) Fostering
  - (ii) Residential provision
  - (iii) 16+ accommodation
  - (iv) Children at risk of custody
  - (v) All placements to minimize the number of placement moves a child may experience
11. The following priorities are identified in the strategy for the period 2023-2026:
  - To work to prevent the need for care through a strong preventative offer.
  - To build a resilient and expert foster care community able to support and care for the older cohort of young people.
  - To improve the experience of care including ensuring a strong voice of our young people is threaded through all services.
  - To continue to improve the numbers of adoptive families available to our children, particularly those that are able to meet the needs of older children and Black children.
  - To ensure that we improve our ability to continuously assess both placement sufficiency and inequity in the system
12. The strategy sets out a series of success measures that will evidence the positive impact of the strategy in four years' time, these will be monitored throughout the life of the strategy by the Sufficiency Steering Group. These are:

- we improved the choice of placement options we were able to offer children in care;
  - more of our children were able to be in homes in or near the borough;
  - there is increased placement stability and children experience less placement moves; and
  - we reduced the numbers of children, especially older ones, coming into care as they and their families were better supported in the community.
13. To deliver the Strategy, as well as a number of linked projects, the Children & Families Division has established a Southwark Homes for Southwark Children Programme, with an associated programme Board chaired by the Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting.
14. The Southwark Homes for Southwark Children Programme's primary aim is to deliver the Strategy's goal of ensuring that more children in our care and those who have left our care are able to live in or close to Southwark. To deliver on that goal a range of projects are contained within the programme that will be pivotal in delivering our Strategy, these include:
- Establishing and developing children's residential care provision in Southwark
  - Ensuring access to London regional provision for secure accommodation through the Pan London Vehicle (PLV)
  - Improving and sustaining the recruitment of in-house foster care capacity
  - Maximising utilisation of in-house foster care capacity
  - Developing the foster care resource to meet the needs of children in our care, reducing the need for institutional care or specialist IFAs
  - Unlocking current and developing new housing pathways for older children in care and care leavers,
  - Developing more local and regionally owned semi-independent accommodation
  - Maximising the efficient use of contracted provision of semi-independent accommodation
  - Develop a viable offer of supported lodgings for care leavers
15. The Programme and Board will act as the delivery body for the Strategy and will report routinely to the Children & Families Continuous Improvement Board, the Children & Adults Board and will be ultimately accountable to the Corporate Parenting Committee for successful delivery.

### **Policy framework implications**

16. The Sufficiency Strategy is set within the context of national policy and legislation, particularly the duty set out in the Children Act 1989 (section 22).
17. It supports the delivery of the following local strategies:
  - (i) Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-24;
  - (ii) The Southwark Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy;
  - (iii) Southwark Five Year Forward View for Health and Social Care;
  - (iv) Partnership Southwark Recovery Plan including Startwell; and
  - (v) Southwark Stands Together.

## **Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts**

### **Community impact statement**

18. Section 149 of the Equality Act, lays out the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which requires public bodies to consider all individuals when carrying out their day to day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees. It requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. The council's [Approach to Equality](#) ("the approach") commits the council to ensuring that equality is an integral part of our day to day business. The Equality Framework for Local Government ([link](#)) exists to help organisations, review and improve their performance for people with characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010.
19. The strategy is designed to improve outcomes and lived experience for all children in care and also for care leavers.

### **Equalities (including socio-economic) impact statement**

20. The strategy has identified that there is a particular need to address the needs of children aged 10-15 years and those aged 16-25 years. It sets out key actions that will reduce inequalities for individuals in these age groups.
21. Children from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds faced significant disadvantage both in terms of their identity and in terms of their education associated with their placement at a distance when compared to their white counterparts. Having provision locally will help address this imbalance and improve outcomes for these children.

### **Health impact statement**

22. The strategy will positively impact children's health by ensuring that providers continue to uphold their responsibilities for ensuring that children are accessing health checks, immunisations and dental checks as needed.

### **Climate change implications**

23. The strategy seeks to develop more local provision particularly residential provision, where 60% of children are in placements over 20 miles away, this will reduce travel emissions.

### **Resource implications**

24. The priorities set out in the strategy aim to reduce the number of children in care and reduce the distance they are placed from home. Also, by further developing a strong preventative offer the need for children to come into care should be reduced, this will have a positive impact on the resources needed to fund care placements.

### **Legal implications**

25. Concurrent's are given in paragraphs 29 – 31 of the report.

### **Financial implications**

26. As this is a very broad strategy, it is not possible to predict financial implications.

### **Consultation**

27. In the development of this strategy the following groups were involved:
- (i) Children and young people who are looked after and Care Leavers
  - (ii) Social Work Teams
  - (iii) Care Providers
  - (iv) Commissioning Officers
28. As provision is developed there will be ongoing consultation and engagement

## **SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS**

### **Assistant Chief Executive – Governance and Assurance**

29. The committee is being asked to note the contents of the strategy which is attached to the report. As noted in the report, the council is required, so far as reasonably practical, to provide a sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of the children who are looked after by the local authority, within the area of the local authority.
30. In taking steps to secure sufficient accommodation, the council must have regard to the benefit of having a number of providers in their area and a range of accommodation that will meet need. The council must be satisfied that this is sufficient. This is set out in Section 22G Children Act 1989.
31. This strategy contains an analysis of the types of accommodation is

required to meet the needs of looked after children and projections as to the likely level of need, both in terms of numbers and the type of accommodation required. This strategy addresses this for the period of the strategy 2023-2026.

**Strategic Director of Finance REF: [19DK2022-23]**

32. The Strategic Director of Finance and Governance notes the contents of this report. Any savings that may be forthcoming from implementing this strategy will assist in reducing the current budget pressure of the Children and Families division; conversely any pressures will have to be absorbed within current budget provision.

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Children Act 1989 (S22)	Children' and Adults' Services, 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Commissioning Directorate 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Suzanne Green 0207 525 4227
Link: <a href="https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/22">https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/22</a>		
Equalities Act 2010	Children' and Adults' Services, 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Commissioning Directorate 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Suzanne Green 0207 525 4227
Link: <a href="https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents">https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents</a>		
Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-24	Children' and Adults' Services, 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Commissioning Directorate 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Suzanne Green 0207 525 4227
Link: <a href="https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s99637/Appendix%201%20Draft%20Corporate%20Parenting%20Strategy%202021-2024.pdf">https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s99637/Appendix%201%20Draft%20Corporate%20Parenting%20Strategy%202021-2024.pdf</a>		
The Southwark Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy	Children' and Adults' Services, 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor,	Suzanne Green 0207 525 4227

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
	Commissioning Directorate 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	
Link: <a href="https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s76190/Appendix%201.pdf">https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s76190/Appendix%201.pdf</a>		
Southwark Five Year Forward View for Health and Social Care	Children' and Adults' Services, 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Commissioning Directorate 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Suzanne Green 0207 525 4227
Link: <a href="https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s65995/Southwark%20Five%20Year%20Foward%20View.pdf">https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s65995/Southwark%20Five%20Year%20Foward%20View.pdf</a>		
Partnership Southwark Recovery Plan including Startwell	Children' and Adults' Services, 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Commissioning Directorate 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Suzanne Green 0207 525 4227
Link: <a href="https://selondonccg.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Partnership-Southwark-Recovery-Plan-August-2020.pdf">https://selondonccg.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Partnership-Southwark-Recovery-Plan-August-2020.pdf</a>		
Southwark Stands Together	Children' and Adults' Services, 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Commissioning Directorate 160 Tooley Street, London, SE1 2QH	Suzanne Green 0207 525 4227
Link: <a href="https://www.southwark.gov.uk/engagement-and-consultations/southwark-stands-together/southwark-stands-together-pledges">https://www.southwark.gov.uk/engagement-and-consultations/southwark-stands-together/southwark-stands-together-pledges</a>		

## APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Southwark Council: Children in Care and Care Leavers Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2023-2026

## AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Lead Officer</b>	David Quirke-Thornton, Strategic Director of Children's and Adults' Services	
<b>Report Author</b>	Suzanne Green, Interim Head of Children and Young Peoples Commissioned Programmes	
<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	27 October 2022	
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No	
<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b>		
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments Sought</b>	<b>Comments Included</b>
Assistant Chief Executive – Governance and Assurance	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance	Yes	Yes
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	No	No
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team</b>		27 October 2022