

Sufficiency Action Plan

Highlight Report

October 2022



1.0 Our Response

The Corporate Parenting Strategy for Children and Young People in Middlesbrough was presented to and signed off by Corporate Parenting Board in December 2020.

The strategy sets out our vision and action plan for how the Council and our partners will support children and young people who are in our care, and our care leavers, to achieve the best possible outcomes in their lives. Transforming our approach to corporate parenting.

Our Sufficiency Action Plan was developed in consultation and is built around the priorities set out in our Corporate Parenting Strategy. The action plan sets out actions we feel need to be undertaken in order to better meet our needs.

Our Sufficiency Action Plan will be reviewed and updated as actions are completed or as new work is identified in the event of any changes to our sufficiency needs over the 3-year cycle of our plan.

The overall responsible Council officer for the Sufficiency Action Plan for Children and Young People is the Director of Children's Services (DCS). For each of the six priority themes, senior Council officers have been delegated by the DCS as the accountable lead for maintaining an overview of the priorities set out in the action plan.

Themes and Responsible Officers

	Theme	Lead Accountable Officer
1	Strengthening Commissioning For Children & Young People	Head of Service Futures for Families Specialist Commissioning & Procurement Senior Manager
2	Increasing Placements Close to where Children & Young People Live and Learn	Head of Service Future for Families Specialist Commissioning & Procurement Senior Manager
3	Growing Early Intervention & Prevention	Head of Prevention Specialist Commissioning & Procurement Senior Manager
4	Improving Placements & Support for Care Leavers	Head of Service Children Looked After Specialist Commissioning & Procurement Senior Manager
5	Enhancing Learning Outcomes for Children & Young People	Virtual Head Specialist Commissioning & Procurement Senior Manager
6	Building Our Fostering Capacity and Adoption Outcomes	Head of Service Future for Families Specialist Commissioning & Procurement Senior Manager

2.0 Progress against Each Theme

The Commissioning Action Plan has been reviewed and updated in November 2021.

Theme 1 - Strengthening Commissioning for Children and Young People

- Work continues in relation to implementation of Controcc for children and offer of Supplier Incentive Programme (SIP) for providers.
- A Market Engagement Plan is still in development and the aim is to get this presented to Children's DMT in February 2023.

Theme 2 – Increasing Placements Close to where Children and Young People live and learn

- The market is developing locally and work is ongoing in order to understand opportunities for the Council in relation to commissioning these local beds to meet need and reduce the need for external out of area placements.
- There are a range of options being consider in order to increase bed availability and business case development is underway and will be presented for approval through our governance routes.

Theme 3 – Growing Early Intervention & Prevention

- PAUSE continues to deliver and the region is now reviewing our future commissioning intentions as the contract is due to end in 2023.

Theme 4 – Improving Placements & Support for Care Leavers

- Daniel Court continues to be well occupied and effectively supporting our young people with support needs to move into independence.
- There is an opportunity we have just identified in order to further increase our 16+ support bed numbers internally and a business case is being developed to understand the savings and benefits this could offer. There is clear evidence that more provision is needed as we still have 17 placements commissioned externally of which the majority could have been placed in Daniel Court if a bed had been available.
- We continue to awaiting further guidance on the new requirements from Ofsted for unregulated provision moving forward.

Theme 5 – Enhancing Learning Outcomes for Children & Young People

- Work continues on the free school application but the residential element is no longer being progressed as the age range being proposed did not require this type of accommodation.

- SEND review continues and sufficiency of placements is a work stream of that work.
- The commissioning of additional capacity of Alternative Provision (AP) is continues with new provision planning to open over the next year to meet increase in demand.

Theme 6 – Building Our Fostering Capacity and Adoption Outcomes

- Unfortunately since the last report we have sadly seen a decrease in our In-House foster placement numbers from 190 to 162. Whilst we continue to have more in-house (162 52%) placements than IFA (150 48%) placements this decrease is significant. Whilst turnover is anticipated we have sadly seen a number of carers leave in-house and move to IFA carers which not only reduces capacity in-house but is also more expensive.
- In light of the above work is underway an Executive report is being drafted in order to seek approval for an Invest to Save opportunity focusing on stabilising the in-house service, avoid more carers leaving to register with IFAs and potentially increase recruitment.
- Recruitment campaigns continue to be run and promoted locally.

3.0 Impact/Performance/Data

- Weekly reporting on residential placement activity continues and is providing greater level of data on placement changes and needs.

4.0 Risks

- Recruitment continues to be a national issue in a number of areas and work to ensure levels of staffing both internally and externally continue.
- Agency staff are being utilised and work to improve recruitment is ongoing.

5.0 Next Steps

- A full refresh of the Commissioning Action plan is needed and will be completed by end of October 2022.

Owner – Rachel Farnham, Middlesbrough Council, Director of Children’s Social Care

Author – Claire Walker, Specialist Commissioning & Procurement Senior Manager