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ITEM 06

Children's Placements Overview Report

Purpose

1.1 Children in Care Council Summary:

It is really important for Derby City Council to have in place safe accommodation and support for children and young people. To help us do this, we use lists of providers, on compliant framework agreements, who have been able to show us that they can offer safe accommodation and good support.

We use different lists for providers who offer fostering, children's homes and provisions for young people who are 16-17 years to live in a property (either shared or on their own) with support from social care or others.

This report explains the different types of placements that Derby City Council make for children and young people, what the providers offer and how we make sure everyone feels safe and supported.

1.2 The three frameworks used to source these placements are:

- D2N2 Children in Care Framework – for Fostering and Children's Homes used in partnership by Derby City, Derbyshire County, Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Councils.
- Accommodation and Support DPS for 16-17 year olds – for semi-independent placements and support accommodation, and
- Nottinghamshire DPS – for semi-independent placements for 16-17 year olds with complex needs.

1.3 The following report gives detail of the type/range of placements commissioned with external providers for Children in Care and Children in Need, including sufficiency of placement types, quality and cost of placements along with developmental work being undertaken.

Recommendation

- 2.1 To consider the content of the report.

Reason

- 3.1 To understand the use of external provision for Derby City Children in Care and the work undertaken to secure sufficient, safe and quality placements.

Supporting information

- 4.1 The 'One Stop Shop' Commissioning service supports the operational teams within Childrens Social Care and Early Help to find the most appropriate placement to meet the needs of children and young people. Operational since November 2017, this service liaises with the internal fostering team and internal Childrens Homes for placement availability before contacting external providers.

Placements for children and young people can be sourced from both internal and external provisions.

- 4.2 The range of placements made by the service are:
- Internal Fostering and internal Childrens Homes,
 - External Fostering (through Independent Fostering Agencies),
 - External Mother and Baby (fostering),
 - External Childrens Homes,
 - External Semi-Independent, and
 - Secure Welfare placements.
- 4.3 The number of each of these different types of placement, as at 31 December 2020, are as follows:

| Type of placement: | As of 31 Dec 2019 | As of 31 Dec 2020 | % difference |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| External Fostering (including Mother/Baby placements) | 308 | 345 | 12% ↑ |
| External Childrens homes (including Disabled) | 29 | 38 | 31% ↑ |
| External Semi-Independent (including CIN & Care Leavers) | 73 | 71 | 2.7%↓ |
| Secure Welfare Placements | <5 | <5 | N/A |

Overall, the total numbers of Children In Care have risen from 568 (31 March 2019) to 588 (31 March 2020). As at 31 December 2020, there were 640 Children In Care. Of these, 128 placements were with in-house foster carers.

4.4 Fostering and Childrens Homes placements

External Fostering placements are currently made via the D2N2 Children in Care Framework. These placements are made through a matching process, working in partnership with social care to ensure the right placement match.

- 4.5 The D2N2 Children in Care (CIC) Framework also provides 'Mother/Father & Baby' placements. These are made within a foster home with carers who are able to support Mother/Father as well as baby.
- 4.6 External Childrens Homes (residential) and External Fostering placements are also currently made via the D2N2 Children in Care Framework, where young people are not placed in Local Authority maintained homes.
- 4.7 A rigorous referral and matching process, working alongside social care ensures that the carers offered by providers meet the needs of the children.
- 4.8 The D2N2 CIC Framework is a partnership between Nottinghamshire County (Lead Authority), Derby City, Derbyshire County and Nottingham City Councils. This smaller, collaborative commissioning arrangements with D2N2 partners (rather than the previous larger East Midlands framework) supports the aim of building local provider relationships, a key requirement to strengthening placement offers and increasing local sufficiency.
- 4.9 There continues to be a shortage of foster carers available to Derby, which is a national issue. Consequently, we continue to work hard to build and maintain relationships with our local external providers in order to better secure the provision needed for Derby, in Derby. The Corporate Fostering Recruitment Board continues to monitor the numbers of foster carers and retention of fostering households for Derby City children.

4.10 **Semi-independent placements**

Semi-independent placements are sourced via the Supported Accommodation Dynamic Purchasing Solution (DPS) for 16-17-year olds. This DPS went live in 2020 and offers accommodation and support with over thirty different providers within and around Derby City.

- 4.11 The Framework supports placements for Children in Care, Children in Need, Care Leavers and young homeless 16-17 year olds, offering support packages of up to 25 hours per week with the opportunity to create bespoke individual packages for children and young people who have higher needs.
- 4.12 As of 31 December 2020, there were 71 young people in semi-independent placements, a decrease in 11 placements from the same time last year as a direct result of fewer unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) requiring placements, which is not expected to rise to previous numbers.
- 4.13 To provide some flexibility into Derby's Supported Accommodation offer, a proposal for Derby City Council to deliver some support and accommodation is being progressed in partnership with Derby Homes.

4.14 **Secure welfare**

Secure Welfare placements are specialist placements authorised to care for children in a secure setting. These are sourced from a Hub in Hampshire who acts as the point of contact for the secure units in England. These placements are often for a shorter period, before stepdown to an appropriate placement as per the young person's care plan.

4.15 **Quality Assurance**

In order to ensure quality provision, for all placements, there is a focus on working positively with social care and providers.

- Most settings are inspected by Ofsted. These Regulated settings include Independent Fostering Agencies and Residential Children's Homes).
- Semi-independent settings, which are non-regulated, are subject to specific pre-placement checks undertaken on the provider before approving them on the Supported Accommodation DPS.

4.16 Provider checks are completed during the 1) application, 2) award and 3) matching processes. For regulated (Ofsted registered) settings, Derby City Council only place with providers with a good or outstanding Ofsted Inspection.

4.17 For unregulated settings, a quality assurance programme is in place which considers the suitability of accommodation by monitoring providers and/or property during the year based on a RAG rating.

4.18 Furthermore, during the year, *Unregulated Supported Accommodation and Crisis Placement Statement and Guidance* has been written and implemented. This defines what supported accommodation is (for both crisis and unregulated placements), and outlines the processes undertaken when considering such placements and the risk mitigations in place. This helps frontline staff to everybody to understand how unregulated processes work.

4.19 If a complaint or concern is raised, these are investigated and where standards do not meet our requirements or improvements must be made, an action plan with the provider is put in place and monitored. Providers that do not meet the required standards will not be maintained on all Frameworks.

4.20 Additionally, the Corporate Parenting Lead will meet with local private providers for Children's Homes who operate within the Derby City Local Authority area, and ensure that they have a good understanding of any new processes, such as 'Missing' procedures and how to manage allegations. Where there are concerns in relation to Managing Allegations Derby City Council procedures are followed and the Derby City Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) will respond. LADO training is offered through the Partnership.

Placement Sufficiency

4.21 The Local Authority continues to undertake a considerable amount of development work which aims to increase local sufficiency and improve the accommodation offer to our children in care. There is a continued focus on ensuring the right types of placements are available in the right location, which in many cases means more placements local to Derby. This includes:

- Working more closely with the Local Authorities across D2N2, to consider capacity and quality across the whole area to share resources and best practice, including implementation of the D2N2 framework for external residential and foster care.

- Over the last 12 months, the Supported Accommodation DPS (para 4.10-4.13) has gone live which has increased the number of providers in the city from six to over thirty, which provides against a range of needs.
- The STARs outcomes programme (Supporting children and young people To Achieve Resilience), which went live in October 2020, is a new partnership initiative which aims to support young people to meet outcomes in a range of accommodation settings. It supports de-escalation from residential care, foster placements at risk of breakdown (particularly where escalation to residential settings is likely), reunify children in care with primary carers / birth family, and provides Edge of Care services.

Theses and others are outlined in the refreshed Derby City Children in Care Placements Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy, appendix 1.

Public/stakeholder engagement

- 5.1 A series of market engagement events were held with providers for the D2N2 framework, the most recent in November 2020. Feedback gathered informed the contractual arrangements to be established for the commissioning of placements.
- 5.2 The Voice of the Child has and will continue to be incorporated through the procurement process and embedded in tendering and evaluations. Feedback from Voices in Action group and CiC Council was incorporated into the specification for the D2N2 service. A child/young person's question was included in the Provider Tender Questionnaire, a requirement for providers to be eligible for the new D2N2 CiC Framework.
- 5.3 The Voice of the Child is gathered as part of the face to face Quality Assurance process when visiting their home. We encourage feedback on their accommodation ensuring there is the opportunity to have a voice regarding the placement. Feedback is also received through social workers and Independent Visiting Officers, views are collated through the Children In Care Council and we speak to young people in placement where possible.

Other options

- 6.1 None noted.

Financial and value for money issues

- 7.1 There has been a continued increase in the number of all types of external placements made, which has had a significant impact on the overall cost of placements. This has primarily been due to increasing numbers and increasing complexity of young people coupled with shortages of local foster carers and limited inhouse residential capacity.

- 7.2 As the number of external placements made by Derby City relative to in-house placements are rising, and the costs of external placements are more expensive than in-house placements, the total cost of placements is rising. In addition, the overall numbers of Children in Care are also rising.
- 7.3 For example, there has been an increase in external Foster and Childrens homes placements from 278 placements costing c£14.7m in March 2018, to 365 placements costing £19m in March 2020. As at December 2020 this has increased further to 383 placements.
- 7.4 Similarly, the number of supported accommodation placements has increased from 44 placements costing £0.6m in March 2016, to 95 placements costing over £1.7m in March 2020. As at 31 December 2020 there were 71 placements.
- 7.5 The average costs of external placements are:
- Foster placement: £650 - £1,640 per week
 - Children's Home placement: £2,650 - £6,210 per week, however if the young person's needs are high this can be up to £8,600 per week.
 - Secure placement: c£6,000 per week.
 - Supported Accommodation placement: c£280 - £1,500 per week
- 7.6 Spend on external placements is a priority area for People's services and continues to be closely reviewed to ensure it meets need and gives best value for money. The new D2N2 framework from February 2020 enabled negotiation of placement fees through a core placement cost (capped) plus a menu of optional additionalities, enabling more effective reviews and reflect changes to individual packages, in terms of provision and cost.

Legal implications

- 8.1 The Local Authority has a statutory duty¹ to ensure there is sufficient accommodation within the Authority's area which meets the needs of children that the Local Authority is 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 (Sufficiency Duty).
- 8.2 The Derby City Council Placement Sufficiency Strategy outlines how we intend to meet this duty, appendix 1.
- 8.4 The D2N2 Children in Care Placement Framework is led by Nottinghamshire County Council. The Framework commenced on 1st February 2020 and has a maximum term of 4 years with an option to extend for 2 years, expiring in 2026.
- 8.5 The Supported Accommodation DPS is procured locally by Derby City Council as per Public Contract Regulations. This commenced on 1st April 2020 and is currently due to end in 2025.

¹ Children Act 1989, Children Act 2004 and Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010, together with applicable guidance issued.

Climate implications

9.1 None

Other significant implications

- 10.1 The Frameworks facilitate comprehensive safeguarding processes and providers are expected to deliver services that are safe and of sound quality. A regional operational group work closely with Ofsted as the regulatory body to ensure providers are meeting standards, and where concerns are raised, they are dealt with locally and regionally.
- 10.2 The Supported Accommodation DPS requires greater quality assurance as these providers are classed as unregulated and therefore not assessed by Ofsted.
- 10.3 All providers who are accepted onto the Frameworks and DPSs will have been assessed to ensure they can provide appropriate quality of care in full compliance with relevant legislation.

This report has been approved by the following people:

| Role | Name | Date of sign-off |
|---------------------|--|------------------|
| Legal | | |
| Finance | | |
| Service Director(s) | | |
| Report sponsor | Gurmail Nizzer, Director of Integrated Commissioning (CYP) | 05 02 2021 |
| Other(s) | Lisa Melrose, Head of Commissioning (CYP) | 05 02 2021 |

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| Background papers: | none |
| List of appendices: | Appendix 1: Derby City Council Children in Care Placements Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy 2020 – 2023 |