

Children and Young People Scrutiny Review Board 17.10.22

22/22 Children in Care Accommodation Strategy and Sufficiency Update

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director of Peoples Services provided an update about the Children in Care Accommodation Strategy and Sufficiency. The report was presented by the Director for Children's Integrated Commissioning

The Children in Care Accommodation Strategy was attached at Appendix 1 of the report, it was a joined-up system wide response to improve local placement sufficiency for children in care (CIC) and to reduce demand and costs under the auspices of the "Derby Model".

It was reported that a joint Children in Care Joint Strategy Development Group had been established which work in partnership with Health, Education and Social Care to support children and young people with complex needs.

There are four key workstreams:

- Strategic Partnership for Children with Complex needs – Developing the Derby Model
- Engagement and co-production with children in care
- Small Children's Residential Homes development
- Increasing Specialist Placements (D2N2)

The progress on the Small Children's Residential Homes project was highlighted. A tender was launched in June 2022 for phase 1, two initial properties. A contract award was planned for the end of October 2022. The first home was due to open at the end of February 2023. The project aim was to establish six small children's homes for one or two placements in each. The project will continue over the next 3 years in partnership with a children in care provider due to be appointed in November 2022.

A bid was submitted to the DfE by 9 September for Children's Residential Home Capital Funding. A joint bid with Nottinghamshire County Council had been put in, NCC are leading the process and funding was requested to create more specialist provision for children either stepping up or down from more intensive levels of care. For Derby the bid is planned to support the establishment of a new, small specialist Children's Home, local to Derby.

A councillor asked whether there had been any consideration to bringing the Small Children's Residential Homes service in-house and queried who would be the provider. The officer was unable to name the provider until a letter had been sent to the unsuccessful companies. The projects aim was to look at different hybrid arrangements with a provider but also keep Derby City's own Children's Homes, to give open options and more flexibility of provision.

A councillor highlighted the number of small children's homes across the city. However, he hoped that the DCC small specialist children's homes would be in Derby or just over the boundary. Local communities are expressing opposition to these small Children's Homes, he asked if the specialism in the homes would be health or behavioural issues or both? The officer explained the specialisms would include Mental, Physical and Emotional Health. The concerns described were common and the council was trying to have open dialogue with families and residents where a small home was proposed. The homes are smaller than the old model of 6 to 7 people. There was a shortage nationally around accommodation, placements, and providers.

Another councillor asked if these homes would replace out of area school residential placement. The officer explained the service was looking at young people with needs who are placed outside of Derby city. The aim would be to get a residential placement for an identified young person with local provision, Education, Social Care to provide wrap around care for that young person in the home. The councillor asked if the officer was confident that the education provision was available in the city. The officer confirmed that DCC want to ensure that the placement was made locally, dependent on the young person, and that education provision either mainstream or tutoring would be considered as part of the arrangement.

A councillor asked what percentage of CiC were placed locally now given the aim of the Strategy 2020-23 to place 75% of all CiC locally. The officer stated that the 75% target was an aspiration to achieve. The current percentage was not available now but could be circulated to the Board later. After significant increases in the number of children in care over the past few years the numbers were now dropping, but there was still a need for more foster carers and local placements.

Another councillor asked what the historic barriers were, staffing or provision of placements, why are small Children's Homes a better option, how are providers going to address issues. The officer explained that the service and provider can work together to challenging staffing recruitment issues. There was a national shortage of workforce and a constant movement of staff in Care Homes moving to and from Independent Providers. By working together rather than the service just providing placements and package in a framework the relationship becomes a partnership.

A councillor requested data on local placements, the officer said he would ask the Performance Team to provide the information.

A councillor asked if in-house options had been considered. The officer confirmed they had not, but there are in-house Children's Homes available although one is currently closed. Some of the needs of young people mean that in-house provision would not be suitable, the level of need and sufficiency far outweighs DCC in-house provision.

A councillor understood that this project would keep costs down and was a way of providing care differently but was concerned as to how providers can find staff to run children's homes when the service cannot. The officer explained that in-house there was a limited pool of staff, external providers have a larger pool to access. The Council was trying to put in place arrangements for out of area children. The project was a "proof of concept" an alternative option as well as DCC Children's Homes.

The Board resolved:

- 1. to note the establishment of an integrated Children in Care Joint Strategy Development Group across Health, Education and Children's Social Care**
- 2. to note the progress on the Small Children's Residential Homes Project**
- 3. to note submission of a capital bid to the DfE for Children's Residential Homes Capital Funding D2N2 Specialist Children's Homes Provision.**
- 4. To recommend that Council Cabinet consider options for using in- house children's homes and to consider the viability of existing provision to see if it can be utilised wherever possible.**