



Report sponsor: Andy Smith, Strategic Director of People Services.

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Demand on Children's Social Care and Placement Sufficiency

Purpose

- 1.1 Derby City Council is constantly striving to improve its offer to children in care, to support them in achieving their best possible outcomes. The aspiration is to provide every child with a local placement (where appropriate), which meets their needs, wishes and feelings and provides them with the opportunity to thrive and achieve.
- 1.2 With regard to national context, there are increasing pressures on foster placements, as social service referrals increase by up to 40% in some areas. Some LAs are expected to overspend by up to £12m on children's services this year. Due to self-isolation, home schooling and unemployment, many families have been under additional pressure, which has led to an increase in mental health and addiction problems.
- 1.3 In Derby, the Covid 19 Pandemic has had significant implications. The numbers of children in care at the end of Quarter 1 was 655, which is an increase of 35 compared to 12 months ago (30 June 2020 – 619 cases), although numbers have remained broadly in the 650s since Quarter 4 in 21/22 and reflect the range of work underway to appropriately and safely reduce the numbers of children in care.
- 1.4 Demand on placements for looked after children is increasing both nationally and locally and this is presenting significant challenges including around securing sufficient local foster and residential placements, particularly for those young people with more complex behaviour and needs. As a result, the progress made on demand management and sufficiency projects is not always visible against the growing levels of demand.
- 1.5 Through demand management initiatives in Derby, links are being strengthened across Council services and with Multi-Agency Panels, around intervention and preventative measures. Through these connections, the aim is to help and support families to reduce the numbers of children in care. Current demand management initiatives focus on early help and staying together, fostering (including friends and family placements), exit from care and step downs via the Residential Panel.
- 1.6 Work continues on demand management areas, which include:
 - The development of inhouse residential placements.

- The lean review of placements.
 - Fostering opportunities through the Social Impact Bonds and recruitment of the inhouse foster carers.
 - Each workstream has its own key milestones with anticipated progress.
- 1.7 In order to improve the sufficiency of placements, a Children's Sufficiency Accommodation Strategy 2021- 2023 has been developed setting out the key strategic priorities to help improve sufficiency of local placements. See link in Appendix 1.
 - 1.8 Through the D2N2 partnership, Derby City Council is leading on commissioning a new suite of contracts for local Supported Accommodation placements. D2N2 is also developing a single integrated approach to foster recruitment, with fostering workstreams agreed and underway.
 - 1.9 In addition, a bid is being developed for Department for Education capital funding to create additional provision in children's homes for children and young people in the local authority area. It should be noted that £19 million of capital funding is available nationally and the bidding process is likely to be highly competitive.
 - 1.10 The purpose of this report is to advise the Children and Young People Scrutiny Review Board of the projects underway to reduce demand on children's social care services and increase the sufficiency of placements, through new and innovative approaches.

Recommendation

- 2.1 To note the projects underway to reduce demand on children's social care services and increase the sufficiency of placements, through new and innovative approaches.

Reason

- 3.1 To update the Children and Young People Scrutiny Review Board with the latest information on projects underway, with the aim of providing every child and young person with the best possible local placement (where appropriate), which meets their needs, wishes and feelings and provides them with the opportunity to thrive and achieve.

Supporting information

Background

- 4.1 The Children Act 1989 (Section 22G) requires local authorities to take steps that are reasonably practicable to secure sufficient accommodation for children and young people under their care who cannot live at home and whose circumstances indicate that it would be in their best interests to be accommodated within the local authority's area, so that they can see their family and stay at the same school. This is commonly known as the 'sufficiency duty'.
- 4.2 Derby City Council is constantly striving to improve its offer to looked after children, to support them in achieving their best possible outcomes. The aspiration is to provide every child with a local placement (where appropriate), which meets their needs, wishes and feelings and provides them with the opportunity to thrive and achieve.

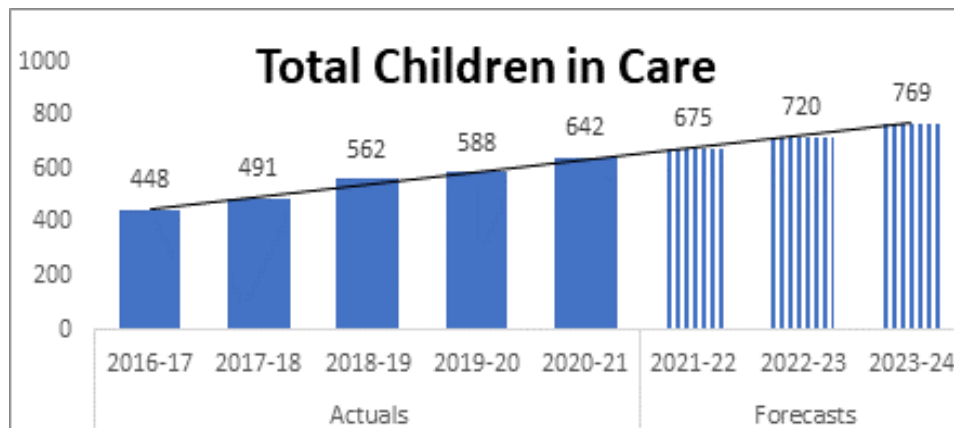
National Context

- 4.3 With regard to national context, there are increasing pressures on foster placements, as social service referrals increase by up to 40% in some areas. Some LAs are expected to overspend by up to £12m on children's services this year. Due to self-isolation, home schooling and unemployment, many families have been under additional pressure, which has led to an increase in mental health and addiction problems.
- 4.4 The Association of Directors of Children's Service has advised the Government-commissioned review of children's social care, as follows:
 - the cost of private placements is "deeply worrying" as well as "financially problematic".
 - recommendation is a cap on fees private providers can charge, and to provide "earlier intensive support, closer to the communities in which children grow up".

Derby Context

- 4.5 In Derby, the Covid 19 Pandemic has had significant implications. The numbers of children in care at the end of Quarter 1 was 655, which is an increase of 35 compared to 12 months ago (30 June 2020 – 619 cases), although numbers have remained broadly in the 650s since Quarter 4 in 21/22 and reflect the range of work underway to appropriately and safely reduce the numbers of children in care.
- 4.6 Work on managing demand remains critical, however, analysis indicates that LAC numbers will remain in the 650-700 range, as we predict and forecast future demand. However, it's not just about new admissions to care, but the reality that children will stay in care for longer durations due to the significant backlog of cases in the family proceedings court which will cause significant bottle necks in placement provision and in some cases, children securing permanence. There are currently a significant number of foster carers unable to take additional children because they are shielding from the virus or have existing placements "staying put".

- 4.7 Forecasts are indicating that the numbers of children in care in Derby are likely to continue to increase, as shown in the graph below:



- 4.8 Demand on placements for looked after children is increasing both nationally and locally and this is presenting significant challenges including securing sufficient local foster and residential placements, particularly for those young people with more complex behaviour and needs. As a result, the progress made on demand management and sufficiency projects is not always visible against the growing levels of demand.

Demand Management

- 4.9 Current demand management initiatives focus on early help and staying together, fostering (including friends and family placements), exit from care and step downs via the Residential Panel. The projects have so far helped to prevent a number of children from entering care, increased the number of friends and family fostering placements and increased the number of exits from care and step downs.
- 4.10 Work continues on demand management areas, which include
- The development of inhouse residential placements.
 - The lean review of placements
 - Fostering opportunities through the Social Impact Bonds and recruitment of the inhouse foster carers
 - Each workstream has its own key milestones with anticipated progress.

Sufficiency of Placements

- 4.11 In order to improve the sufficiency of placements, a Children's Sufficiency Accommodation Strategy 2021- 2023 has been developed setting out the key strategic priorities to help improve sufficiency of local placements. The Strategy includes the following commissioning objectives:

- Make the best use of all existing provision.
 - Ensure consistent, quality and cost effective provision
 - Apply a range of commissioning approaches
 - Work with providers
 - Listen to the voice of the child
 - Jointly commission
 - Local Placements for Local Children
 - Innovate
- 4.12 A copy of the Children's Sufficiency Accommodation Strategy 2021- 2023 is attached as link in Appendix 1 to this report.
- 4.13 Through the D2N2 partnership, Derby City Council is leading on commissioning a new suite of contracts for local Supported Accommodation placements. D2N2 is also establishing a single integrated approach to foster recruitment, with the following fostering workstreams already agreed and underway:
- Short term wins - single marketing, recruitment, training models
 - Benchmarking of the offer to carers (Financial/Non-financial)
 - Feasibility of a fully Integrated fostering model
 - Longer term development – Sufficiency & resources
- 4.14 In addition, a bid is being scoped for Department for Education capital funding to create additional provision in children's homes for children and young people in the LA area. It should, however, be noted that £19 million of capital funding is available nationally and the bidding process is likely to be highly competitive.
- 4.15 The purpose of this report is to advise the Children and Young People Scrutiny Review Board of the projects underway to reduce demand on children's social care services and increase the sufficiency of placements, through new and innovative approaches.

Public/stakeholder engagement

- 5.1 The Council wishes to work with children and young people, along with their parents and carers, in shaping how we manage and organise the planning, resources and services that support and care for them, this includes, for example, through the Children in Care Council.

Other options

- 6.1 Careful consideration has been given to developing the projects that are underway to reduce demand on children's social care services and increase the sufficiency of placements. All options are open to consideration, as we strive to improve our services for children in care.

Financial and value for money issues

- 7.1 Demand on placements for looked after children is increasing both nationally and locally and this presents challenges around securing sufficient local foster and residential placements. As a result of rapidly growing demand, the Council is placing increasing numbers of children with independent foster agencies. These high costs independent placements have led to increasing pressures on Council budgets, including People Services.

Legal implications

- 8.1 The Children Act 1989 (Section 22G) requires local authorities to take steps that are reasonably practicable to secure sufficient accommodation for children and young people under their care who cannot live at home and whose circumstances indicate that it would be in their best interests to be accommodated within the local authority's area, so that they can see their family and stay at the same school. This is commonly known as the 'sufficiency duty'.

Climate implications

- 9.1 None.

Other significant implications

- 10.1 None.

This report has been approved by the following people:

Role	Name	Date of sign-off
Legal	None	
Finance	None	
Service Director(s)	Suanne Lim, Director for Early Help and Children's Social Care and Gurmail Nizzer, Director of Children's Integrated Commissioning.	07/10/2021
Report sponsor	Andy Smith, Strategic Director of People Services.	07/10/2021
Other(s)		

Background papers:	None.
List of appendices:	Appendix 1 - <u>Children in Care Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2020-2023</u>