

CABINET



Report subject	Sufficiency Strategy for Children in Care (CiC) and Care Experienced Young People (CEYP) 2021 – 2024
Meeting date	23 rd June 2021
Status	Public Strategy
Executive summary	The Sufficiency Strategy sets out how Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP Council) intends to meet its sufficiency duty as laid out in section 22G of the Children Act 1989. This requires local authorities to take steps that secure, as far as reasonably practical, sufficient accommodation for children in care within their local authority area.
Recommendation	That Cabinet recommend that Council fully supports this strategy
Reason for recommendation	<p>In 2010, the Statutory Guidance for the Sufficiency Duty was issued. This guidance is explicit in placing a duty on all local authorities and children’s trusts to act strategically to address gaps in provision by ensuring that they include, in relevant commissioning strategies, their plans for meeting the sufficiency duty.</p> <p>The Children & Social Work Act 2017 extends the duties on all local authorities (including District and Borough Councils) to have regard to a set of corporate parenting principles when exercising their functions in relation to children in care and care experience young people up to the age of 25.</p>
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Mike White - Portfolio Holder for children and young people
Corporate Director	Elaine Redding - Corporate Director, Children’s Services
Contributors	<p>Sarah Langdale – Children’s Commissioner, Quality and Commissioning</p> <p>Brian Relph – Service Director, Children’s Social Care</p> <p>Lorraine Marshall – Service Director, Children’s Social Care</p>

Wards	Council wide
Classification	For Recommendation / Update and Information

Background

1. This Sufficiency Strategy supersedes the previous 2017 – 2020 strategy and sets out how BCP Council will ensure that the right care, accommodation and support services are available for children in care and care experienced young people. Our overall aim is to ensure that the best outcomes for our children and young people are achieved by working across the council and with partners.
2. The national and local drivers underpinning this strategy are:
 - The Children Act 1989
 - The council's Corporate Strategy which sets out our ambition for children and young people to have brighter futures, providing a nurturing environment, high quality education and great opportunities to grow and flourish.
 - The council's Corporate Parenting Strategy, which sets out our commitment to being the best corporate parents and grandparents so that our children in care and care experienced young people have bright futures
3. The Strategy includes:
 - A profile of the BCP population of children in care and care experienced young people.
 - Data in respect of the availability of in-house fostering provision, Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) provision, residential children's home provision and post 16 externally commissioned semi-independent provision and Housing commissioned provision which offers accommodation with housing related support within/close to the BCP area.
 - Comprehensive data analysis of accommodation needs for children in care and care experienced young people.
4. The sufficiency strategy for 2021-4 uses sufficiency data from March 2020 data returns as the baseline. This enables relevant statistical national and regional comparisons and data will be updated on an annual basis throughout the life of the report.
5. Priorities are clearly documented within the Sufficiency Strategy to ensure that the Council is able to meet the predicted future needs for securing suitable accommodation. A multi agency action plan has been developed with key strategic leads identified.
6. The Sufficiency Strategy has been consulted on within Children's Services and it is anticipated that the final version will be signed off by Cabinet in September 2021.

The Sufficiency Strategy for CiC and CEYP 2021 – 2024

7. The purpose of the Strategy is to set out BCP Council's vision for, and approach to, providing sufficient, safe, secure and suitable placements for children in care and care experienced young people over the next 3 years. It supports the delivery of BCP Council's Children in Care Priorities, an important element of planning sufficient

accommodation is to take early, preventative action to support children and families so that fewer children come into care.

Capturing the Voice of Children and Young People

8. Each strategic lead will have their own mechanisms to enable participation and to gather views and feedback, finding out what children and young people views are about the accommodation, care and support available. These views will inform the monitoring and commissioning of providers and the provision they offer.
9. To help develop our strategy over the next three years we will ask the children and young people of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole to share with us what they believe suitable accommodation should look like. During 2021 engagement has been sought from young people via the Youth Parliament debates on homelessness. Further engagement via Corporate Parenting Board and CiC / CEYP participation will ensure all views are captured.
10. Providers will share their experiences of the conversations they had with children and young people who have access their accommodation, this will enable us to work in partnership to create accommodation which can meet all young people's needs and where they can flourish and find stability. Understanding why accommodation may not be meeting need will enable us to proactively monitor providers, embed high standards of care and support and acknowledge that good to outstanding services respond well to all situations facing children and young people.

The Sufficiency Strategy Priorities

11. Our priority areas over the next three years include:
 - Priority 1: Improve services to support children, prevent children entering care and increase support to families to help children to return to their home through the new edge of care and early help offer.
 - Priority 2: Embed the Housing Strategy for care experienced young people
 - Priority 3: Increase in local fostering placements.
 - a. Increase the in-house fostering cohort, especially for age range 12+ years
 - b. Increase the independent fostering agency availability of placements within a 20-mile radius of BCP Council through partnership working and framework management.
 - Priority 4: Improve commissioning arrangements for complex joint placements and arrangements that support these for example shared care and short breaks
 - Priority 5: Increase the number of providers and improve the quality of residential provision within the BCP area through market shaping and monitoring.
 - Priority 6: Based on current and emerging needs, taking a strategic commissioning approach in developing the market to provide suitable local provision for

complex teenagers both on the edge of care and in care who are at high risk of CE.

Priority 7: Improve the monitoring of placements and the connectivity between commissioning, the provider and social worker to ensure outcomes are appropriate and met.

12. To achieve these priorities the Sufficiency Strategic Leads will oversee a Sufficiency Working Group which has been created and will chaired by the Children's Strategic Commissioner. This Working Group will monitor and track the progress of the priorities within this strategy

Consultation

13. All members of the Children Services Extended Leadership Team have had the opportunity to contribute to the development of the strategy, and to comment on it prior to it being formally signed off by Children's Services Senior Leadership Team.
14. Comments and suggestions received during the consultation period were considered and either reflected in the final version of the strategy or embedded within the 'action plan'.

Next steps

15. Sufficiency Strategic Lead meetings will be organised in order to monitor the operational activity of the working group. There will be a clear focus and energy on achieving the seven key priorities as outlined in the Sufficiency Strategy. The meeting will ensure that all multi agency parties are working towards the intended outcomes.
16. Achievements will be reported into the 'Children and Young People Partnership Board.

Summary of financial implications

17. The Sufficiency Strategy for Children in Care (CiC) and Care Experienced Young People (CEYP) will guide and enable joint funding of accommodation and support services across the partnership to ensure objectives are met and aid the development effective and efficient ways of working.
18. Where there is opportunity to jointly fund with partners this will be explored.

Summary of legal implications

19. There is a statutory duty on Local Authorities to produce a Sufficiency Strategy as detailed in section 22G of the 1989 Act which requires local authorities to take strategic action in respect of those children they look after and for whom it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation within their local authority area.
20. Although the sufficiency duty lies with each local authority, that duty can be implemented most effectively through a partnership between the authority and its Children's Trust partners. Each local authority has a duty, under section 10 of the Children Act ('the 2004 Act') to make arrangements to promote co-operation with its

relevant partners with a view to improving the wellbeing of children in the authority's area.

21. The guidance is therefore issued under two provisions:
- section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970, which requires local authorities, in the exercise of their social services functions, to act under the general guidance of the Secretary of State; and
 - section 10 (8) of the 2004 Act, which requires all local authorities in England and each of their relevant partners to have regard to guidance from the Secretary of State when exercising their functions in relation to their duty to co-operate to improve the wellbeing of children in the local area.

Summary of equality implications

22. In achieving the priorities of the strategy provision will, where possible be commissioned to inequalities where possible and to respect and support children and young people where 'protected characteristics' apply.
23. The Sufficiency Strategic Leads will ensure that data is analysed and continues to inform all areas of accommodation commissioned which may affect children and young people such as emotional health and wellbeing, mental health, stability, and choice.

Summary of risk assessment

24. A risk register will be incorporated within the sufficiency action plan 6 months after the strategy has been adopted, when more detailed planning is under way.

Background papers

None

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Sufficiency Strategy for Children in Care (CiC) and Care Experienced Young People (CEYP) 2021 – 2024