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ITEM 06

Childrens 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:

- East Midlands Regional Children's Framework (EMRCF) – for Fostering and Children's Homes until 31 January 2020 to be replaced for Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire by the D2N2 Children in Care (CiC) Framework from 1 February 2020.
- Accommodation and Support Framework 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 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. The support service in its current form has been operational since November 2017, the 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 30 September 2019, are as follows:

Type of placement:	As of 31 Aug 2018	As of 31 Aug 2019	% difference
External Fostering (including Mother/Baby placements)	257	329	28% ↑
External Childrens homes (including Disabled)	29	29	0% ↔
External Semi-Independent	59	80	35.5% ↑
Secure Welfare Placements	3	1	66.6% ↓
Total	348	439	26% ↑

Overall, the total numbers of Children In Care have risen from 499 (31 March 2018) to 568 (31 March 2019). Of these 568, 102 placements were with in-house foster carers.

4.4 Fostering and Childrens Homes placements

External Fostering placements are currently made via the East Midlands Regional Childrens Framework. These placements are made through a matching process, working in partnership with social care to ensure the right placement match.

- 4.5 The East Midlands Regional 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. ‘Mother/ Father & Baby’ placements will be a development focus for Integrated Commissioning (CYP) in 2019/20, by considering the availability of alternative provision such as community based services, including mentoring and befriending, for those in these placements.
- 4.6 External Childrens Homes (residential) placements are also currently made via the East Midlands Regional Childrens 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 External Fostering placements, Mother/Father & Baby placements and external Childrens Home placements will continue to be made via the East Midlands Regional Children’s Framework until 31 January 2020. From 1 February 2020 it is proposed that they will be sourced through the newly established D2N2 Children In Care Placements Framework.
- 4.9 The D2N2 CiC Framework is a partnership between Nottinghamshire County (Lead Authority), Derby City, Derbyshire County and Nottingham City and Councils. Moving to smaller, collaborative commissioning arrangements with D2N2 partners will support the aim of building local provider relationships, a key requirement to strengthening placement offers and increasing local sufficiency.
- 4.10 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 establishment of a Corporate Board overseeing the corporate priority of increasing the numbers of in-house foster carers, is expected to reduce the increasing reliance in Derby on external carers.
- 4.11 **Semi-independent placements**
- Semi-independent placements are sourced via the Accommodation and Support Framework for 16-17 year olds. This Framework offers accommodation and support with over six different providers within and around Derby City.
- 4.12 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.
- 4.13 As of 31 August 2019 there were 80 young people in semi-independent placements, an increase in 21 placements from the same time last year. The number of young people accessing this type of placement continues to increase due to an increase in young people ‘stepping down’ from residential care; more young people in this age becoming Looked After; and an increase in Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) claiming to be between 16 – 18 years.

- 4.14 In 2014 when the framework was established, it supported 20 young people.
- 4.15 Due to an increasing number of young people requiring support and accommodation, principally unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC), a proposal for Derby City Council to deliver some support and accommodation, rather than all provision being sourced externally, is being considered.
- 4.16 **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.
- 4.17 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. Semi-independent settings, which are non-regulated, are subject to a specific pre-placement checks undertaken on the provider before approving them on the Supported Accommodation Framework. Where complaints are made, these are investigated and where standards do not meet our requirements or improvements can 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.
- 4.18 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. New initiatives commencing over the next year which will support placement matching and stability include exploring providers who may be able to offer different types of placements, and working across with D2N2 to develop the local provider market to deliver placements nearer to Derby. The initiatives include procurement via block contracts which may offer better value for money, for, for example, emergency provision (often more costly). This is outlined in the Derby City Placement Sufficiency Strategy, which is currently being refreshed.

Public/stakeholder engagement

- 5.1 When developing the D2N2 Framework, a scoping exercise undertaken by D2N2 commissioners included a market engagement event with providers in February 2019. Feedback gathered informed the contractual arrangements to be established for the commissioning of placements. A further pre –launch provider engagement event is planned for 5 November 2019.
- 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.

Other options

- 6.1 All accommodation and support to be provided via one route internally, or externally. This would not be the best way for the Local Authority to meet its Sufficiency Duty, due to the variation in need of children and young people

Financial and value for money issues

- 7.1 There has been a continued increase in the number of all types of external placements made over the last 6 years, 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 increased numbers of UASC presenting in Derby City.
- 7.2 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 335 placements costing £18.04m in March 2019.
- 7.3 Similarly, the number of semi-independent placements has increased from 44 placements costing £0.6m in March 2016, to 74 placements costing over £1.3m in March 2019.
- 7.4 The average costs of external placements are:
- Foster placement: £600 - £1,640 per week
 - Children's Home placement: £2,625 - £6,210 per week, however if the young person's needs are high this can be up to £7,000 per week.
 - Secure placement: c£6,000 per week.
- 7.5 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. Changes to the Framework specification and financial parameters from February 2020 will allow negotiation of placement fees through a core placement cost (capped) plus a menu of optional additionalities. In comparison, in the current EMRF Framework the full core and additionalities are currently under one capped Framework cost per provider. Going forward, the changes will enable more effective reviews and reflect changes to individual packages, in terms of provision and cost. A similar model has proved effective in the West Midlands.

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).

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

- 8.2 The Derby City Council Placement Sufficiency Strategy outlines how we intend to meet this duty, and is currently being refreshed.
- 8.3 The East Midlands Regional Childrens Framework, led by Northamptonshire County Council commenced in 1st February 2016 and will end in January 2020.
- 8.4 The D2N2 Children in Care Placement Framework is led by Nottinghamshire County Council. The Framework will commence 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 Accommodation and Support Framework is procured locally by Derby City Council as per Public Contract Regulations. This commenced on 1st March 2017 and is currently due to end in 2020.

Other significant implications

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 The Accommodation and Support Framework requires greater quality assurance as these providers are classed as unregulated and therefore not assessed by Ofsted.
- 9.3 All providers who are accepted onto the Frameworks will have been assessed to ensure they can provide appropriate quality of care in full compliance with relevant legislation. This is currently contracted to be monitored on an ongoing basis by the East Midlands regional team.

This report has been approved by the following people:

Role	Name	Date of sign-off
Legal	Karen Griffin, Commercial Lawyer	21/10/2019
Finance		
Service Director(s)		
Report sponsor	Gurmail Nizzer, Director of Integrated Commissioning (CYP)	10/10/2019
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	Laura Rose, Procurement Category Manager	21/10/2019
	Peoples Services	
Background papers:	none	
List of appendices:	none	