

Children Looked After, Sufficiency Strategy

Date: 18 July 2024

Report of: Head of Democratic Services

Report to: Scrutiny Board (Children and Families)

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

During the 2023/24 municipal year the Board received a number of reports focussed on the Council's approach to Children Looked After (CLA) in terms of the numbers of CLA, associated costs and significantly increased demand, how CLA are cared for, safeguarding practice and overall guiding strategies such as the implementation of the MacAlister Review and the Stable Homes, Built on Love Implementation Strategy. These items were considered within the context of the directorate's service transformation approach which given the ongoing financial challenge and increased demand and demography pressures is driven by a need to deliver 'more for less'.

The national context impacting children's social care services has seen significant pressure on local government finances, increasing demand, demography pressures and escalating cost of social care and education external placements. This has led to significant pressure on the Council's financial sustainability not just within children and families' services, but as a whole.

The CLA Sufficiency Strategy is therefore linked to the Board's past consideration of these issues and aims to provide a framework to deliver the significant change and development required to respond to the challenging national context and to have a material impact upon the Council's overall financial sustainability by delivering reduced costs of external placement provision within the Children and Families Directorate.

The Board is therefore asked to note and comment on Children Looked After Sufficiency Strategy Executive Board report which is presented as Appendix 1 to this report and the Sufficiency Strategy itself at Appendix 2. Appendix 3 provides key messaging on the approach being taken to deliver the strategy.

Recommendations

- a) The Board is asked to note and comment on the Children Looked After Sufficiency Strategy and identify any future areas where scrutiny activity might take place and add value to the work being undertaken by the Children and Families Directorate.

What is this report about?

- 1 This report provides the Children Looked After Sufficiency Strategy considered at Executive Board on 19 June 2024 for scrutiny board consideration and comment. Also included at Appendix 3 is a CLA Sufficiency Strategy infographic which provides key messaging on the approach being taken by the Council.

What impact will this proposal have?

- 2 Scrutiny plays an important role within the Council's Governance framework providing the opportunity for wider check and challenge and to add value to policy development and decision making processes.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

- 3 Developing a CLA sufficiency strategy that has quality of placement, family first and stable homes as key principles offers a positive environment for CLA to develop and thrive and to have fulfilling lives upon leaving care. As such the report and strategy contained in the appendices contribute significantly to the health and well being and inclusive growth opportunities for Children Looked After in Leeds.
- 4 The Best City Ambition seeks to use available resource to deliver the Council and City's ambitions, addressing the financial pressures being experienced in particular with regard to external CLA placement costs will contribute to the overall financial sustainability and robustness of the authority.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted?

Yes

No

- 5 This is an update report to scrutiny as such no specific consultation has taken place.
- 6 Each year the Scrutiny Board is presented with a draft work programme at its June meeting for initial discussion and agreement. The possibility of an update item on the CLA sufficiency strategy was mentioned in discussion of that item.
- 7 The report and strategy contained in the appendices to this report were considered at Executive Board on 19 June 2024.
- 8 Consultation and engagement details related to the Executive Board report are contained in Appendix 1.

What are the resource implications?

- 9 There are no specific resource implications associated with this update report. However, Appendix 1 contains details on resource implications linked to the CLA Sufficiency Strategy.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 10 Any risk implications associated with this strategy are addressed in Appendix 1.

What are the legal implications?

11 Any legal implications associated with this strategy are addressed in Appendix 1.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

12 This is a scrutiny update report and as such no other options were considered. Appendix 1 contains relevant comments in relation to the sufficiency strategy itself.

How will success be measured?

13 This is a scrutiny update report and as such success measures are not relevant. Appendix 1 containing the 19 June Executive Board report provides details in relation to the sufficiency strategy.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

14 This is a scrutiny update report and as such this is not relevant. Appendix 1 containing the 19 June Executive Board report provides details in relation to the sufficiency strategy.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – CLA Sufficiency Strategy Executive Board report considered on 19 June 2024.
- Appendix 2 – Leeds Sufficiency Strategy 2024-2027
- Appendix 3 – CLA Sufficiency Strategy Key Messaging Infographic

Background papers

- None