

# Report of the Director of Children's Services to the meeting of Children Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be held on Wednesday 15 March 2023

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## Subject: Update on the Bradford Sufficiency Strategy

### Summary statement:

The Children Act 1989, the Sufficiency Statutory Guidance (2010) and the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (2010) places a duty of 'Sufficiency' upon Local Authorities (or their Trusts). Under this duty Local Authorities (or their Trusts) must, so far as is reasonably practicable, ensure that there is a range of locally available placements, either by direct provision or commissioned services, sufficient to meet the needs of all children in care.

Last March the Sufficiency Strategy and an action plan was shared with this Committee. At that meeting it was agreed that officers would return in March this year to provide an update of progress.

Annex 1 provides that update. Progress has generally been good and there are important areas of work where the Sufficiency Strategy Action Plan has underpinned real improvements in the care of children looked after such as the improvements to the Council's residential care and better support for family members looking after children under Special Guardianship Orders. Whilst there are many positive developments there are also areas where more work needs to be done, for example implementing strengthened 'edge of care' services and improving support for young people in supported accommodation.

Since the last Overview & Scrutiny, a new Sufficiency Strategy was approved. It will be important that the new Trust works with children and young people, carers, and wider stakeholders to fully implement the new Strategy in partnership with the Council.

### **EQUALITY & DIVERSITY:**

As a Corporate Parent Bradford Council needs to provide for a broad range of needs within its population of looked after children. The placement options available therefore need to be sufficiently diverse and targeted to respond to the differing needs of individuals with the development of the necessary expertise to appropriately care for children and young people with complex care requirements. The population of children looked after in Bradford is changing, for example with more children with British Asian heritage becoming looked after. It will be important that the next Sufficiency Strategy reflects and responds to the increasing diversity of looked after children in Bradford.

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### **Portfolio:**

**Children & Families**

**Overview & Scrutiny Area:**

**Children's Services**

## **1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Members are asked to consider the update of progress on work to support the Bradford Sufficiency Strategy which sets out how the Council will work to ensure that children looked after in the District have stable homes that enable them to thrive.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Children Act 1989, the Sufficiency Statutory Guidance (2010) and the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (2010) places a duty of 'Sufficiency' upon Local Authorities (or their Trusts). Under this duty Local Authorities (or their Trusts) must, so far as is reasonably practicable, ensure that there is a range of locally available placements, either by direct provision or commissioned services, sufficient to meet the needs of all children in care.
- 2.2 This is an important responsibility for Local Authorities and this is particularly the case for Bradford where the number of children looked after has risen sharply in recent years. In March 2017 there were 926 children and young people looked after in the District. By March 2022 there were 1,447, a rise of 56%. The population of children looked after is also changing, for example more British Asian heritage children are becoming looked after.
- 2.3 The last Bradford Sufficiency Strategy 2020-2023 was updated with an action plan to set out the priorities for change. This was shared with this committee in March and a commitment was made to return in a year to review progress.
- 2.4 A revised and refreshed Placement and Sufficiency Strategy 2022-2025 (see Appendix A) was created and approved. An Action Plan was developed to map and track progress against key areas of delivery within the Strategy.

### **2.5 Progress against the Strategy**

- 2.5.1 The progress against the strategy is attached to this report as Appendix B.

### **2.6 Next Steps**

- 2.6.1 The recent OfSTED inspection considered sufficiency, noting recent progress but continuing pressures. There were two recommendations relating to the Council's sufficiency duty recommending improvements to:

- Foster carer morale, training, recruitment and retention, including the support offered to special guardians.
- The quality and safety of in-house residential provision, including safer recruitment.

These recommendations will be addressed through the OfSTED Improvement Plan but should also help shape the next Sufficiency Strategy.

### **3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

3.1 No other relevant considerations.

### **4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL**

4.1 There are no direct financial implications from this report.

### **5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES**

5.1 If there are no significant risks arising out of the implementation of the proposed recommendations it should be stated but only on advice of the Assistant Director Finance and Procurement and the City Solicitor.

### **6. LEGAL APPRAISAL**

6.1 There are no legal issues arising from this report.

### **7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

#### **7.1 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

None.

#### **7.2 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS**

None.

#### **7.3 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

None.

#### **7.4 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT**

None.

#### **7.5 TRADE UNION**

There are no direct Trade Union issues from this report.

#### **7.6 WARD IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct ward implications from this report.

#### **7.7 IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

Corporate Parenting is an integral element of the Sufficiency Strategy on which the Corporate Parenting Panel will maintain an oversight

## **7.8 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT**

None.

## **8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS**

8.1 None.

## **9. OPTIONS**

9.1 Not applicable.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

10.1 Members are recommended to review the consider the report and progress update.

## **11. APPENDICES**

11.1 Appendix A – Sufficiency Strategy 2022-2025.

11.2 Appendix B – Bradford Sufficiency Action Plan.

## **12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

12.1 None.

## **APPENDIX A – SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY 2022-2025**

See separate document.

## APPENDIX B – SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

Recommendation	Actions	Timescale	Progress Update March 2023
Review current edge of care provision to develop a cohesive all age edge of care offer that ensures timely intervention and support to maintain children and young people at home wherever possible and appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete review of BPP and Intensive Family Support services by Peopletoo.</li> <li>Bring service development proposal to DMT/CMT.</li> </ul>	<p>March 2022</p> <p>April 2022</p>	<p><b>AMBER:</b> – Reviews have been completed but a final approach has not yet been implemented. We have worked with Leeds colleagues to learn from their experience and develop a structured approach. Implementation is a priority for the next six months.</p>
Carry out further analysis of the underlying factors in the disproportionate volume of emergency care admissions in order to tighten care planning processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carry out additional audit activity on cohort of care admissions.</li> </ul>	<p>April 2022</p>	<p><b>GREEN:</b> Audit completed and this has informed development of an emergency unit to provide short term therapeutic care for children alongside intensive work with the child and family to support successful reunification.</p>
Progress a programme of reviews to identify children placed at home on orders where the discharge of those orders should be appropriately sought.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete baseline audit with Warrington BC.</li> <li>Progress care discharge applications on identified cases via CIC planning process.</li> </ul>	<p>April 2022</p> <p>May 2022 onwards</p>	<p><b>GREEN:</b> Audit completed. Children’s needs have been fully considered and we are working proactively with CAFCASS, IROs and the Court to progress discharge of orders where this is in the interest of the child. This work to discharge orders has not progressed as quickly as we would like due to significant pressures within the Family Court after the pandemic.</p>
Agree a revised SGO (Special Guardianship Order) policy that permits some children placed with friends and family connected carers to exit the care system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subsequent to legal and regional sign off bring revised SGO policy to DMT/CMT.</li> </ul>	<p>May 2022</p>	<p><b>GREEN:</b> complete and new policy in place.</p>
Consolidate our schedule of fostering payments to ensure that we remain competitive with neighbouring Local Authorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subsequent to legal sign off bring updated schedule of allowances to Executive.</li> </ul>	<p>April 2022</p>	<p><b>GREEN:</b> this was completed and presented to executive last year. The payment has been employment and we are seen to be comparative in the regime.</p>

Recommendation	Actions	Timescale	Progress Update March 2023
Develop an annual fostering recruitment strategy that is sufficiently targeted to recruit carers in line with our priority placement needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an annual fostering recruitment strategy for approval by DMT.</li> </ul>	May 2022	<b>GREEN:</b> We have invested in the Fostering Team and have recruited new managers with a successful track record including in recruitment and retention. The team are now working on a range of projects to improve recruitment.
Implement an advanced fostering level for children with specific and/or complex needs who would otherwise be placed in residential care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorporated within updated schedule of allowances being brought to the Executive.</li> </ul>	April 2022	<b>GREEN:</b> We have developed improve support and a pathway for training and development for 'Level 4' Foster Carers who work with children with additional needs.
Strengthen the range and volume of placement support options to maximise our ability to hold children in family placements liaising with health colleagues on the clinical elements of this.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop breadth and volume of localised family placement options both in house and commissioned.</li> </ul>	April 2022 onwards	<b>AMBER:</b> we have agreed and developed a Level 4 progression criteria but we are still in talks with partner agency around the support need of these carers. We have also implemented 1 constellation of Mocking Bard and have plans to expand by 2 more constellations. We are also developing localised support
Complete a review of our current residential provision to ensure clarity on homes individual statements of purpose and resulting capacity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review individual statement of purpose for each children's home.</li> </ul>	March 2022	<b>GREEN:</b> Completed. There has been extensive work with partners to review current residential provision. This has informed a revised strategy.
Develop a longer term strategy for the growth of the Council's internal residential portfolio which is cost effective and geared towards our identified placement needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Present residential strategic development plan to DMT/CMT.</li> </ul>	April 2022	<b>GREEN:</b> There is a comprehensive plan for the expansion and development of residential care in Bradford. This has involved extensive work with stakeholders and will be submitted for approval to Executive Board later in the Spring.
In producing this residential strategy there will be an emphasis on smaller group home provision making full use of the new regulatory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorporate this aspect within the residential strategic development plan.</li> </ul>	April 2022	<b>GREEN:</b> The revised residential plan includes more small homes where research suggests children do better.

Recommendation	Actions	Timescale	Progress Update March 2023
permissions to cluster a number of homes under one registered manager.			
Engage with health partners to put in place clinical wrap around support for those homes providing care to children and young people with high end emotional health needs or needs arising from behaviours linked to autism and learning disability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress through Children's and Young People's Board (CYPB).</li> </ul>	July 2022	<b>AMBER:</b> Discussions have taken place but as yet a joint plan has not yet been confirmed. This will continue to be discussed at the Improvement Board with an aim to agree a way forward before the Summer.
Integrate the existing placement coordination team with the fostering family finding workers to form a single point of placement finding activity that fully maximises use of internal capacity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress any necessary consultation process and accommodation issues.</li> </ul>	June 2022	<b>GREEN:</b> The change has taken place and is working well. This will be strengthened further with the team's co-locating.
Undertake market testing of commissioning options for in district small group homes tailored to individual categories of need minimising risk of unavoidable use of unregulated placements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subject to DMT/CMT approval progress tendering exercise.</li> </ul>	June 2022	<b>AMBER:</b> Initial discussions have taken place but at present we are prioritising expansion and reform of the Council's own provision. This will be reconsidered once improved BMDC homes are in place.
Progress the introduction of a revised Bradford specific purchasing framework for 16+ supported accommodation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring proposals to Overview and Scrutiny and progress implementation.</li> </ul>	April 2022	<b>RED:</b> Due to changes in legislation regarding the care of over 16s we have paused this work until national guidance from DfE and OfSTED is available.
Engage with the external market pro-actively to develop strong relationships with good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress active dialogue and engagement with existing and potential local providers.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	<b>GREEN:</b> There has been extensive work with external providers but this is in a very difficult context locally and nationally for external



Recommendation	Actions	Timescale	Progress Update March 2023
quality providers and encourage localised capacity building in line with our strategic placement priorities.			provision.
Broaden services that are made available to disabled children and their families as part of a re invigorated short term break strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refresh and consult upon local offer for short term breaks.</li> </ul>	August 2022	<b>AMBER:</b> Council for Disabled Children reviewed commissioned and report and recommendations submitted. Board and 5 workstream's established. Exploration and scoping exercises underway and links being established with other Programme cross overs i.e. Early Help and SEND.