

Report of the Strategic Director of Children's Services to the meeting of the Executive to be held on June 7th 2022

Subject: Development Plan for Children's Homes

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Summary statement:

This reports details proposals for the future development of the children's homes maintained by the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council. It is essential that the Council as a corporate parent is able to provide high quality care for children requiring residential provision within premises which are homely and fit for purpose. The range of needs that can be met within the homes also needs to be tailored to meet our strategic needs in line with the recently completed sufficiency strategy for placements.

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.

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Portfolio:

Children & Families

Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Children's Services

1 SUMMARY

1.1 The attached report summarises the current position in respect of the eleven registered children's homes currently maintained by the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council and proposals for their future development. The Executive is asked to review previous decisions made in respect of capital spend on children's homes developments with suggestions made for alternative capital expenditure in a manner which is more consistent with strategic placement requirements. A recommendation is also made for the closure of the service at Valley View and to close Meadowlea to be replaced by two 3 bed specialist residential provision for 8 to 11 year olds. These proposals are designed to;

- Enable us to run our current homes with lower bed numbers, making them homelier; improving matching considerations, increasing placement stability; reducing the risk of poor Ofsted grades or closure
- Cease residential provision for 5 to 7 year olds
- Create additional small home capacity to meet the needs of young people with high level complex needs (neurodiversity, criminal exploitation, severe attachment issues) and emergency admissions.
- Provide Staying Close provision linked to homes, which will improve capacity and speed up move on plans.
- Dispose of sites that are no longer fit for purpose as Children's Homes
- Further develop our short term break capacity for disabled children

1.2 These proposals will consolidate our bed provision at 45 bed spaces in a manner which will facilitate full occupancy in a more targeted way. This will be both cost efficient and in line with the placement needs of children and young people in our care. Alongside this it will allow the development of five staying close move on placements to aid transition of young people in the homes, the restoration of the three shared care beds as part of the no wrong door model and critically provide a means of increasing short term break capacity for children with disabilities.

1.3 We have consulted with and will continue this process with colleagues in Planning and Estates. In relation to planning permission we are advised that to open new small home provision we do not need full planning permission, but a Certificate of Lawfulness.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 It is essential that as a corporate parent Bradford Council is able to provide high quality residential care to a broad range of children and young people with specific and often complex needs. The Council has experienced some difficulties in this respect over recent years with a series of challenging Ofsted inspection outcomes over the course of 2021. Improvement work is ongoing across the service to strengthen the management of the homes and the quality of care provided. This

strategic plan for the development of the homes aligns with this improvement work. Alongside the practice quality issues there is a parallel need to ensure that we have placement options that are commensurate with the needs of our population of looked after children so that they can be met wherever possible locally in a manner which is also cost effective from a budgetary perspective.

- 2.2 Our large group home provision (5 to 7) beds created inherent risks regarding matching, these risks have historically led to challenges from Ofsted, home closures and having to run homes significantly below capacity.
- 2.3 We have no small specialist provision for complex high need young people and no emergency admission provision. Our Edge of Care Home is currently being used for a solo placement for a specific young person and we have no Staying Close provision linked to our long-stay homes that would support young people towards independence, whilst maintaining their link to their home. The volume of short term break capacity is insufficient to our needs. Changes to the Regulations for children's homes in October 2021 present us with an opportunity to increase our provision without the need to increase the number of Registered Manager posts. One Registered Manager is now able to register for up to four homes as long as the registered number of beds does not exceed 6 young people.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 These proposals should be viewed with the context of the sufficiency strategy for placements and Ofsted findings and recommendations for individual homes and the Council's overall performance as a corporate parent.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

- 4.1 The proposals will be delivered within the existing service budget. Any new capital build or purchase of new properties will be assessed by the Project Appraisal Group (PAG) and then approved by the Executive.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

- 5.1 There are no specific risk and governance issues identified within the report other than those associated with an inability to make appropriate placement choices for individual children and young people.

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

- 6.1 S22G The Children Act 1989 places a statutory duty on local authorities to "take steps that secure, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within the authority's area which meets the needs of children that the local authority are looking after, and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation in the local authority's area. In taking these steps, local authorities are required to have regard to the benefit of having a number of accommodation providers and also a range of accommodation in their area capable of meeting different needs and sufficient to secure that outcome.

- 6.2 Statutory Guidance on Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children (2010) states that the above sufficiency duty must be seen as a core part of how local authorities meet their broader duties to ensure that looked after children's needs are fully assessed, that effective matching takes place, so that these are met within an appropriate placement, and that regular reviews are held to evaluate whether the child's needs are being met and to address emerging issues.
- 6.3 The Statutory Guidance also states that although the sufficiency duty lies with each local authority, it can be implemented most effectively through a partnership between the local authority and relevant partners. Under S10 Children Act 2004 each local authority is required to make arrangements to promote co-operation with relevant partners with a view to improving the wellbeing of children in its area. Partners also have corresponding duties to co-operate with the local authority in making those arrangements.
- 6.4 In formulating its sufficiency strategy, the local authority must also have regard to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the public sector equality duty in relation to those with protected characteristics.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None identified

7.1 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no sustainability issues arising from this report

7.2 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

There are no greenhouse gas emissions impacts identified within these proposals,

7.3 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

Whilst there are no specific community safety proposals arising from this report the location of any proposed new home developments needs to be carefully considered both in terms of the needs of the children/young people in residence and impact upon local communities. It is a requirement that before a new home can be considered a Locality and Environmental Impact and Risk Assessment is completed.

7.4 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

The Human Rights Act 1998 makes it unlawful for any public body to act in a way that is incompatible with an individual's human rights including the right to respect for private and family life.

7.5 TRADE UNION

All necessary consultation will take place with Trade Unions.

7.6 WARD IMPLICATIONS

There will be specific ward implications dependent upon the location of individual homes

**7.7 AREA COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS
(for reports to Area Committees only)**

Not applicable.

7.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The development of the Council's children's home provision is of critical significance from the perspective of our responsibilities as a corporate parent. The Council needs to be able to provide a range of high quality local care options consistent with the placement requirements of its looked after children.

7.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

Not applicable.

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None.

9. OPTIONS

Options in relation to individual children's homes are contained within the accompanying report together with recommendations on strategic priorities for further developments.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 The children's home at Valley View that has previously provided care for disabled children should be confirmed for closure on the basis that it has been effectively inoperative for nearly twelve months and does not provide a physical environment that is consistent with the care of children.
- 10.2 Alongside the decision to close Valley View it is also recommended that the former BEST service does not resume on the basis that the health funding that underpinned it has been directed into other alternative projects.
- 10.3 The previous decision to allocate capital funding for a new build project at Fell Lane is rescinded on the grounds that the scale and nature of the proposed project is no longer consistent with the services strategic needs.
- 10.4 In principle agreement is given for a potential new build project aimed at increasing short term break capacity for disabled children and in particular those with complex needs associated with neuro-diversity developmental issues.
- 10.5 In principle, agreement is given for the development of six additional small group homes via either purchase or rental to include the disposal of the site at

Meadowlea, to be replaced with two linked small group homes with a revised focus.

- 10.6 In principle agreement is given to the development of linked staying close flats via either purchase or rental for the supported transition of young people from the homes into the community

11. APPENDICES

11.1 Appendix 1 - In House Children's Homes Strategic Development Plan 2022–2023.

11.2 Appendix 2 - Strategic Children's Homes Development Plan (capital costs)

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None.