

Report for: 6th March Cabinet

Title: The Looked After Children Sufficiency Strategy 2018 - 2021

Report

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Lead Officer: Sam Jacobson, Commissioning Manager

Ward(s) affected: All

Report for Key/

Non Key Decision: Key

1. Describe the issue under consideration

1.1 This report presents the draft Looked After Children Sufficiency Strategy for approval. The Council has a statutory duty to publish such a Strategy in order to identify how it will meet its duties to ensure that there is sufficient accommodation for looked after children that meets their needs and is within the local authority area.

2. Cabinet Member Introduction

2.1 I am pleased to present the draft Looked After Children Sufficiency Strategy for approval. As corporate parents, we in the Council have a profound duty towards the looked after children in our care. The outcomes set out in the Strategy are intended to contribute towards looked after children developing and thriving and to strengthen our overall approach towards vulnerable children, young people and families in the borough.

3. Recommendations

3.1 Cabinet is asked to approve the Looked After Children Sufficiency Strategy attached as Appendix 1.

4. Reasons for decision

4.1 Councils are required to review and refresh their LAC Sufficiency Strategies regularly to take account of changing demographics, shifting patterns of demand and developments in the market. This strategy will replace the previous Sufficiency Strategy which ran until the end of December 2017, offering an opportunity to present refreshed data and some innovative approaches to the challenges of LAC sufficiency.

5. Alternative options considered

- 5.1 It is a statutory requirement for the Council to produce a Looked After Children Sufficiency Strategy and for it to be made publically accessible. Alternative options were not therefore considered.

6. Background information

- 6.1 The Sufficiency Strategy has been developed to support the Council to deliver its vision of “giving all children and young people the best start in life, including world class education” and to ensure that the safety and welfare of children and young people are at the heart of all the Council does. The Strategy will also enable the Council to meet its statutory duties, by focusing on achieving improved outcomes for children and young people so that they are less likely to need long term use of the care system.

- 6.2 The core outcome of this Strategy has been identified to support the Council to meet its duties, recognising that this relies on responding to and managing demand as well as managing the market and that the key priority is ensuring that children and young people are supported to develop and thrive in the most enabling environment possible, where their safety and welfare can best be ensured. It is:

Children and young people in care live in stable, high quality settings, where their needs can be met and their outcomes improved, enabling them to return home where this is in their best interests

- 6.3 There is a strengthened focus on edge of care provision in this Strategy in recognition of the poorer outcomes for most children and young people coming into care and the benefits of supporting families to stay together in their communities and networks. These edge of care services can both divert children from care and also enable children and young people to return home quickly and safely after a period in care. Whilst some of these services require investment, they will lead to a more economic system overall with a greater proportion of funding to support proactive edge of care work thereby avoiding the need for and costs of social care interventions.

- 6.3 Elsewhere on this agenda, the new vision for children’s services is being presented to Cabinet for consideration and this Strategy has been developed in recognition of its core principles and focus.

7. Contribution to strategic outcomes

- 7.1 The LAC Sufficiency Strategy supports the Council’s priority, as set out in the Corporate Plan, Building A Stronger Haringey Together, to enable all children and young people to have the best start in life, including world class education.

8. Statutory Officers comments (Chief Finance Officer (including procurement), Assistant Director of Corporate Governance, Equalities)

8.1 Finance (Chief Finance Officer)

8.1.1 Whilst this report does not explicitly state a commitment to specific sums of expenditure, compliance to the statutory duties inherent within the strategy requires the council to ensure that there is appropriate funding provided to deliver those services.

8.1.2 The appropriate levels of funding are stated in the council's medium term financial strategy and is agreed by Full Council on an annual basis.

8.2 Procurement (Head of Procurement)

8.2.1 Strategic Procurement notes the contents of this report and will provide the necessary procurement support where required to implement the Policy.

8.2.2 Strategic Procurement already works with commissioners in developing commissioning strategies and markets to support outcome based requirements across other care categories. This support will be extended in to the LAC category as required.

8.3 Legal (Assistant Director of Corporate Governance)

8.3.1 Under Section 22G of the Children Act 1989 ("General duty of local authority to secure sufficient accommodation for looked after children") the Council must take steps that secure, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within the its area which meets the needs of its looked after children, and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation that is in the Council's area ('the sufficiency duty'). The Council should be able to show that at a strategic level it is taking steps to meet the sufficiency duty, as far as is reasonably practicable.

8.4 Equality

8.4.1 The Council has a Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share those protected characteristics and people who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.

8.4.2 The three parts of the duty applies to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, sex and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership status applies to the first part of the duty.

8.4.3 The decision to adopt the Looked After Children's Sufficiency Strategy will enable the Council to meet its statutory duties to ensure that there is sufficient appropriate accommodation for looked after children. The strategy will have a positive impact on those within its remit; specifically looked after children,

among whom males and BAME children are overrepresented. In relation to the Public Sector Equality Duty, the strategy will advance equality of opportunity for looked after children with protected characteristics and foster good relations between looked after children with protected characteristics and those who do not.

9. Use of Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1 Draft LAC Sufficiency Strategy
- Appendix 2 EQIA Draft LAC Sufficiency Strategy

10. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
None