

Placement Sufficiency Strategy

Supporting our children and young people to have a safe place to live and thrive

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Leicester
City Council

Introduction

What is placement sufficiency?

We believe in supporting all of our children and young people to have a safe place to live and thrive. We recognise that most children and young people are best brought up within their own families, however where this is not possible, we look to find a family or a home that best meets their needs and offers access to the support and opportunities needed for success and happiness in later life.

To meet this vision, we need to have the right home, in the right place, at the right time. This strategy sets our aims and priorities to deliver this.

Guiding Legislation

The Children Act 1989 (section 22g) requires local authorities to take steps that are reasonably practicable to secure sufficient accommodation for children and young people under their care who cannot live at home and whose circumstances indicate that it would be in their best interests to be accommodated within the local authority's area (for example, in order to stay at the same school or near to other family where contact can easily take place). This is commonly referred to as 'the sufficiency duty'.

This strategy is also guided and supported by:

- The Housing Act 1996
- The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Social Care and Education Priorities
- Corporate Parenting Strategy
- Permanence Strategy
- Placement Sufficiency Audit
- Fostering Statement of Purpose
- Fostering Marketing and Recruitment Strategy
- Edge of Care
- Care Leavers Offer

In Summary...

Finding the right home

Securing homes and support that meet the needs of our children and young people.

In the right place

For most of our children and young people their placement will be within the local area or close to their home.

Where it is in the best interest of the child or young person, the right place may be outside of the local area.

At the right time

Well planned moves, that reduce the need for placement changes and emergency placements.

Our aims

Our Social Care and Education common purpose statements:

- To support people to have a safe place to live and thrive
- Keep people safe from harm
- Promote inclusion and a sense of belonging
- Enable people to be independent/self-sufficient and resilient
- Enable people to pursue life opportunities
- Ensure we support people's rights and listen to their wishes
- Ensure access to self-improvement
- Promote good emotional, mental and physical health

Our placement sufficiency aims:

1. To provide an increased range of homes for our children and young people that meet their needs and provides them with a safe place to live and thrive.
2. To provide stability for our children and young people, by providing timely options to achieve permanence and providing homes 'at the right time'.
3. To reduce our reliance on commissioned Independent Fostering Agencies, through developing the recruitment and retention of Leicester City Council foster carers and their capacity to meet the needs of the children they care for.
4. To review and to reduce our reliance on out of area residential home.
5. To commission smarter to reduce costs, assure quality and support better matching through building better relationships with our market providers and establishing stronger commissioning practices.

Our Children and Young People

To ensure we address the specific needs of our children and young people, a comprehensive placement sufficiency audit was completed in January 2019. The audit provided an analysis of current and predicted needs and demands for our looked after children, young people and 16-17 year old homeless using data from the last three years.

As with the national picture, the number of children looked after in Leicester City has increased significantly over the last 5 years, a 32% increase from 533 to 677. Notably the rate of increase has reduced considerably due to the impact of edge of care interventions within Leicester City's Early Help and Prevention Services such as MST (Multi Systemic Therapy), Family Support, Family Group Conferencing and commissioned interventions such as local volunteer support from ' Safe Families' and a sustained effort on progressing permanence for our children and young people.

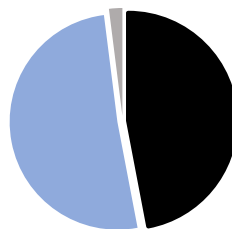
Demographics



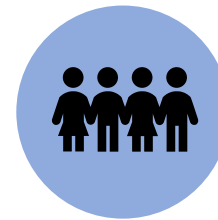
The age profile of our looked after children is 20% aged 0-3, 26% aged 4-9 years, 37% aged 10-15, and 17% aged 16 years+.



The ethnicity profile of children looked after does not reflect the ethnicity of the general child population of the city in that proportionately more white children (61%) are in care in Leicester City.

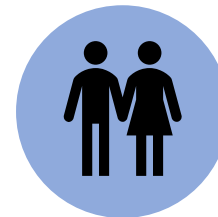


47% of our children and young people are female (this is high compared to other local authorities).



There has been a significant increase in the number of large sibling groups entering care. This puts additional pressure on placements able to care for more than two children.

Care experienced adults and 16/17 homeless



The number of care experienced adults continues to increase, year on year since 2013. At the end of 2018, there were 250 care experienced adults and 107 eligible 16 and 17 year olds in our care.



Additionally, over the last three years there has been over 160 presentations of homeless 16 and 17 year olds presented to housing options.

Homes we provide

We recognise that our children and young people have different needs when it comes to finding a home, and we want to support all of our young people to have a safe place to live and thrive. To do this, we provide a range of different homes and settings.

Whilst we believe our homes and families are the best place for our children and young people. We also recognise that to meet the needs of some of our children and young people, we need to commission homes from other providers.

Foster care

Our vision is for all children in foster care to have stable lives, establish trusted relationships, to feel cared for and to benefit from high quality foster care for as long as they need it.

78% of our children and young people live with foster families. Leicester City currently supports over 270 fostering households offering short-term, permanent, specialist and short-break care. A significant number of our carers are family and friends of the children they care for (also known as kinship foster carers).

For young people transitioning into adulthood, our staying put scheme offers them the opportunity to remain with their foster carer post-18.

Our Fostering for Adoption scheme ensures that more children can be placed with their potential permanent carers on a fostering basis while the local authority seeks a legal order from the courts.

Children's homes and residential care

Our vision is for all children in residential care homes to have a safe place to live, to feel cared for and to benefit from the support offered by staff and services to succeed and thrive.

8% of our looked after children live in children's homes or in residential care homes. Leicester City maintains five high-quality internal children's homes supporting up to 36 young people – including specialist support for disabled young people.

Where out of area or more specialised provision is required, we commission bespoke packages for each young person.



Homes we provide

Semi-independent accommodation

Our vision is for all young people in living in semi-independent accommodation is to have a safe place to live, whilst developing their life skills to successfully transition into adulthood and independence. In 2015 Leicester City Council commissioned 84 beds of semi-independent accommodation and housing related support awarded to a single provider. Due to increases in demand and emerging complex needs, additional accommodation and housing related support for young people is sought through spot purchasing.

Independent living

We want our young people to succeed and thrive during their transition into adulthood and beyond. In 2018-19, over 40% of our young people were living independently. We ensure that our young people leaving care are a priority on our waiting list for social housing and offer financial and practical support to our young people when they find a home – including no council tax if living in Leicester City.

Specialist accommodation and support

To support our vision to provide homes that meet a child or young person needs, we work closely with our partner agencies and local providers to provide specialist accommodation and support – for example, health or education provisions.

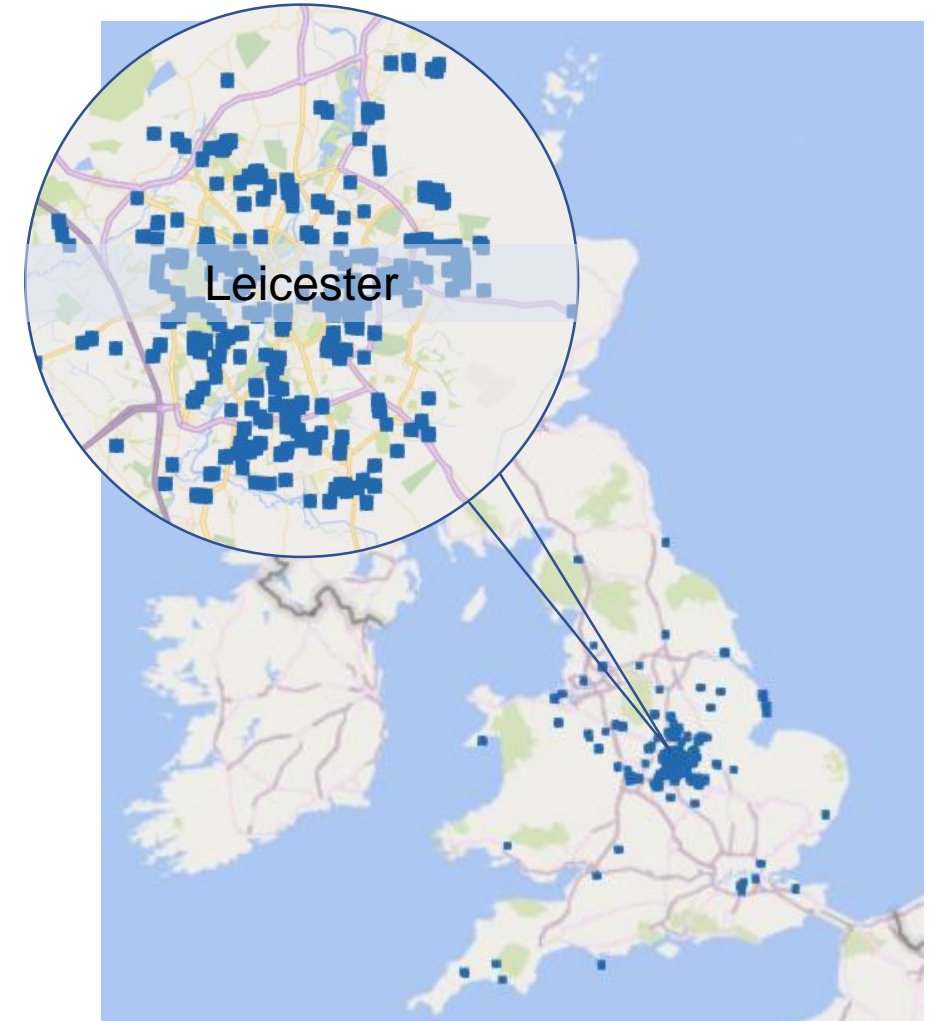
Where our children live

We aim for the majority of our children and young people live within the local area or close to their home. However we recognise that sometimes it may be in the best interest of the child or young person to live outside of the local area (for example, for their own safety or need for specialist support).

Our aim is to provide more local homes and support, this means:

- recruiting and retaining more foster carers from the local area
- improving our childrens homes
- working with local providers who offer accommodation and support to ensure they are aware of our children and young people's current and emerging needs, and managing the market to ensure these needs can be met.

82% our children living within the city, or within a 20 mile area of their home. We aim to increase the number of available homes within and close to the city through our planned activity, maintaining our performance of above national average of 80%.



Children and young people homes, 2019

Stability and permanence

Creating stability

We want all of our children and young people to feel safe and secure at home. Our strategy focuses on finding homes that create stability.

We are committed to:

- Finding homes that meet the long-term needs of our children and young people
- Supporting children, families, carers and staff to create stability for our children and young people
- Promoting the benefits of stability for our children and young people

To help achieve this, we will regularly monitor and support:

1. The number of children who experience three or more moves within 12 months
2. The number of children who have been looked after for 2.5 years who have been in the same home for two years.

Stability remains good in Leicester City. The number of children experiencing 3 or more moves in 12 months, reduced from a high of 15% five years ago to below the national average of 10%.

Achieving permanence

There has been significant activity towards helping our children and young people achieve permanence in a timely manner, this means finding a stable, long-term home. An increasing number of our children achieve permanence through special guardianship orders or adoption.

This is outlined and monitored through our on-going permanence activity.

Moving towards independence

For our older young people, we want to help them plan towards independence. Many of our young people transition from care to semi-independent or supported living arrangements, an increasing number remain with their foster carers, before moving into their own tenancy.

Forecasted need and demand

Foster care

It is projected that there is a need for an additional 50 foster placements by the end of 2020.

Specifically in relation to carers able to offer:

- Long-term fostering
- Care for larger sibling groups
- Care for young children with complex and therapeutic needs

This will be met through recruitment of new foster carers and exploring options available to existing foster carers to meet this need.

Children's homes and residential care

Leicester City manages five internal children's homes that support the complex needs of many of our children and young people.

We recognise that there will always be a need for commissioning external residential homes – especially for our children and young people with specialist needs, or a need to be placed away from the local area.

It is projected that the demand for our homes will remain stable over the next 3 years. We want to continue to improve and develop our homes to further meet the complex and emerging needs of our children and young people.

16+ accommodation and housing related support

The number of care experienced adults accessing support is expected to increase significantly by 2020.

This is due, in part, to the rising number of children and young people and our commitment to offer services and support to care experienced adults to 25.

The needs of our young people vary. Our analysis shows:

- 70% will require low-level support
- 20% will require mid-level support
- 10% will require high-specialist support

We recognise the need to find homes that meet their emerging needs, create stability and promote their independence.

What we will do to achieve our aims and priorities

Foster Care

We will develop and successfully deliver a new foster carer marketing and recruitment strategy to recruit and retain more foster families.

We will review and improve the journey from enquiry to approval for prospective foster carers.

We will review and revise our support offer for our new and existing foster carers.

We will consult with our existing foster carers to see what development opportunities exist.

Residential Care

We will develop and improve our own children homes to meet the on-going and future needs of our children and young people.

We will review all external residential placements to ensure quality, value for money and ensure they meet the needs of our children and young people.

16+ Accommodation and Housing-related Support

We will recommission accommodation and housing-related support for our care experienced adults and 16-17 homeless young people that better meets the wide range of emerging needs.

We will revise our Care Leavers offer and be clear about how we will support young people to independence through providing quality home and support.

Commissioning

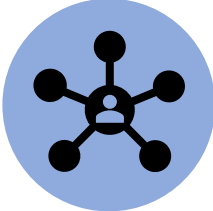
We will review and explore smarter ways of commissioning to reduce costs, assure quality and support better matching through building better relationships with our market providers and establishing stronger commissioning practices.

We will use a co-production approach and consult with young people, families and staff to understand their needs.

We will develop a clear Market Position Statement to help local providers meet our children and young people's needs.

We will improve systems to record and monitor information to be better meet the current and future needs of our children and young people.

How we will work



We will work with services across the council and partner agencies to provide quality accommodation and support to our children and young people, foster carers and staff.



We will work with providers to ensure our children and young people are receiving quality services.



We will use a co-production approach to engage with our children, young people, foster carers, staff and providers lead to better understanding and quality provision with support that meets the needs of our young people.



We will work with Ofsted, who regulate our homes, to enhance quality and safety of children.



We will be passionate advocates for our children, young people and families.



We will ensure our work is underpinned by good analysis and understanding of need. Our systems and processes will support the gathering and sharing of this information so it can be used to inform strategy and practice.



We will ensure commissioning activity meets corporate expectations relating to quality, value for money, prevention and wellbeing.

What the difference will be once our aims and priorities are achieved

This area will be completed by our children and young people. This will be updated following a period of consultation.

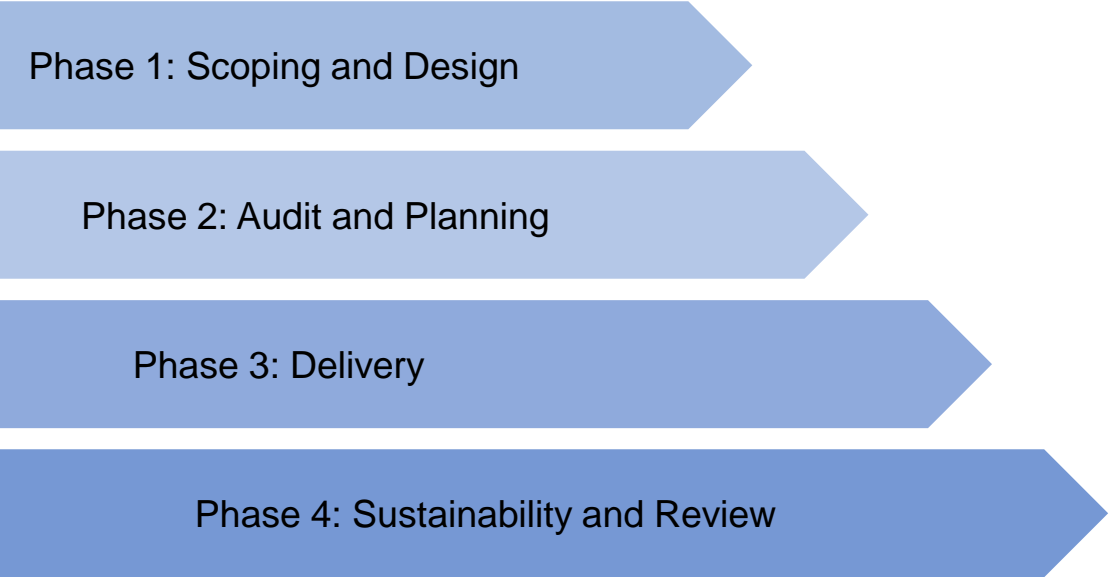
Co-production is important to us, as hearing the voice and taking into account the views of our children and young people (and those that represent and support them) helps us to continually improve quality of services.

We are committed to reviewing our work with our children, young people, families, staff and providers to ensure we continue to deliver quality services that meet the current and emerging needs, and provide real value for money and ultimately prevent crisis and improve overall wellbeing.

To be completed post-consultation with our children and young people.

Action plan and governance

Project Phasing:



A detailed 3-year delivery plan will accompany this strategy, monitored by the existing governance structure.

Governance:

Social Care and Education Programme Board

Placement Sufficiency Board

Foster Care

Residential Care

16+ Accommodation and Housing-Related Support

Relevant services report to the Placement Sufficiency Board chaired by the Director for Children’s Services which monitors and tracks progress and is overseen by the Social Care and Education Programme Board chaired by the Director for Social Care and Education.