
**RIGHT HOME, RIGHT SUPPORT – A COMMISSIONING STRATEGY FOR
ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER –
DRAFT CABINET REPORT**

This item has been brought forward for determination by Cabinet on 21 November following the implementation of the Pre-Election Period. This item was unavailable prior to the publication of the Committee agenda but its consideration by scrutiny is considered as essential in the decision making process.

Purpose of the Report

1. As part of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee 2018-19 Work Programme, the Committee agreed to receive a copy of the draft cabinet report entitled “Right Home, Right support – A Commissioning Strategy for Accommodation and Support for children Looked After. (attached at **Appendix A**) for scrutiny and review prior to its consideration by Cabinet.
2. The Council’s Cabinet are due to consider a draft strategy at its meeting on 21st November and this report provides the Committee with the opportunity to consider and review the draft strategy and provide any comments or concerns to Cabinet prior to its meeting.

Out of County Inquiry Recommendations and Response

3. This Committee’s inquiry report into Out of County Placements, identified a two recommendations which referred to a Commissioning Strategy for Accommodation and Support for Looked After Children. The Cabinet subsequently responded to these recommendations as listed below:

Recommendation R8 - A strategic approach to commission placements, to improve outcomes and safely reduce the number of children being looked after, must be developed and implemented as soon as possible.

Response – This recommendation is accepted

The Social Services Directorate Management Team is working with the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4Cs) to develop a placement commissioning strategy by March 2019.

Recommendation 9 - It tasks officers in the Social Service Directorate to review the Placement Commissioning arrangements by 31 March 2019.

Response – This recommendation is accepted

Work has been undertaken to ensure compliance with the 4Cs requirement.

4. A copy of the full cabinet response to this Committee's inquiry report in to "Out Of County Placements" which was presented to Committee on 11 December 2018. Copy attached at **Appendix B**. The Committee wrote welcoming the responses and requested a progress on the implementation of the accepted recommendations. The Cabinet Member subsequently responding agreeing to provide regular progress reports.

Background

5. The Commissioning Strategy is part of, and should be read in conjunction with the overarching 3 year Cardiff's Children's Services Strategy "Delivering Excellent Outcomes" (2019-2022) approved by Cabinet in July 2019.
6. Cardiff has seen a significant rise in numbers of Children Looked After since 2014. The reasons for this rise are varied and complex, but include:
 - Increased level of risk and complexity of children and young people including the impact of exploitation, adverse childhood experiences and unaccompanied asylum seekers.
 - New early help / preventative arrangements which are expected to have a positive impact on supporting families to remain together and promoting family reunification are not yet fully implemented.

- There are low numbers of children being looked after rather than coming into the care system which results in an overall rising increasing numbers.
 - The population in Cardiff is growing with a consequential increase in need and demand.
7. This Committee's Inquiry report in to Out of County Placements identified that there was a need for more residential provision in Cardiff and that in particular, settings for young people over 14 years should be prioritised. It recommended that where possible, the Council should utilise its own housing stock to facilitate this growth.
 8. The Corporate Plan for 2019 – 2022 sets out the Cabinet's commitment to ensuring that more Children Looked After are supported to live in Cardiff by March 2020. In addition to increasing the number of Local Authority Foster Carers, the plan sets out an intention to increase the range of local residential provision.
 9. To achieve the Corporate Plan Objectives, a placement strategy was initiated with the support of the Childrens Commissioning Consortium Cymru (4Cs) in January 2019. It was immediately evident that there needed to be a comprehensive project to take this forward and particularly to undertake a full analysis of need and to develop a Commissioning Strategy, a Market Position Statement and an Implementation Plan for all Children's Care and Support Services, not just residential care provision.

Issues

10. The commissioning strategy identifies priorities ranging from a family based approach to being looked after to services to prevent children coming into care. Overall, it is critical that Children's Services deliver this strategic approach to commissioning services that include the development of in-house services and in-area arrangements. This can only be achieved if there is an in-depth understanding of the needs of the children and young people and an evidence-base for developing new services to effectively meet those needs.

11. It is also important the Council continues to work positively with external providers, through clear market position statement and market development strategies which support service developments. A healthy mixed economy is needed to achieve the best value for money and range of services.
12. It is the intention of the Commissioning Strategy (**Appendix 1**) and Market Position Statement (**Appendix 2**) to clearly map out the future intentions of Cardiff Council to secure a mixture of in-house and external provision for Children Looked After to effectively meet current and future needs.
13. A detailed Implementation Plan is in development that identifies actions required to deliver the priorities of the Commissioning Strategy subject to approval by Cabinet.
14. Subject to approval, the Commissioning Strategy (**Appendix 1**) and Market Position Statement (**Appendix 2**) will be shared with all key stakeholders. Engagement with partners and the market is being undertaken, setting out the Council's commissioning priorities and giving providers an opportunity to share with commissioners how they would like to engage with the service area going forward. Individual discussions between commissioners and providers will enable organisations to have more detailed conversations with Council Officers regarding their business plans for future development. It is expected this engagement will assist the strengthening of relationships with providers and maximise the opportunities for their response to service needs.
15. This Commissioning strategy aims to contribute to this vision with a particular focus on 'safe and secure environments in which to grow and thrive and parents protect and support their children against the dangers and risks of life'. It will contribute through focusing on seven key commissioning intentions.

16. **Commissioning Intentions: ‘the right homes for our Children Looked After’**

Our analysis of need, and the experiences of our young people, has enabled us to develop the following commissioning priorities: Over the next three years we will:

- Complete the reshaping of **early help and support** to families to prevent the escalation of needs and reduce the need for alternative homes including Family Group Conferencing prior to any child becoming looked after.
- Where it is safe to do so, we will look to bring our children and young people back closer to Cardiff, using a Re-unification Framework to support children to return safely to their own families, as we know this achieves better outcomes for them.
To respond to the **therapeutic and mental health and well-being needs** of Children Looked After, their parents and carers through the development of a range of therapeutic service with partners.
- Reshape our respite provision to offer flexible short break opportunities including emergency provision for children with disabilities, and other children young people and families.
Redesign our Local Fostering service in order to increase our numbers of Cardiff Foster Carers homes for children
Increase the availability of local placements through our collaborative market engagement with providers to shape provision to better meet the needs of our children and young people.
- To commission and develop **additional internal residential provision** in Cardiff to enable flexibility especially for complex cases.
To further develop accommodation **sufficiency for vulnerable young people and those leaving care**.
To further develop our **understanding of the needs** of this important group of children and young people by completing a detailed needs analysis.

17. As this commissioning programme is implemented provision will be accessible to all young people based on their own unique set of circumstances, including;

young carers, those affected by disability and ill health, those affected by adverse childhood experiences, those from BME communities and those affected by any form of exploitation including unaccompanied children seeking asylum.

18. These 9 commissioning intentions are explained in more detail in the Strategy attached at Appendix A. The strategy gives the overview of priority commissioning projects over the next 3 years as well building upon the excellent work already underway. For each priority, business cases will be prepared for each service which will be subject to the appropriate decision making governance.
19. The next phase of this commissioning strategy will be the development of an implementation plan. A considerable amount of this work has already been started and the programme will build on this strength. A programme management approach will be put around the 9 priorities. The programme will involve 9 work-streams reflecting the priorities and small teams of key staff will lead the work. The governance of this programme will be through the existing Social Services Commissioning Board which meets monthly and is chaired by the Director of Social Services. A number of the priorities will involve partner agencies and they will be invited from the outset.

Scope of Scrutiny

20. This report will enable the Committee to review, assess and comment on the draft Cabinet Report “Right Home, Right support – A Commissioning Strategy for Accommodation and Support for children Looked After”. Members may also wish to review whether the strategy enables Cardiff Council to meet the challenges it is facing and ensure that the right support is available at the right time for children and young people through the implementation of this Strategy.

Way Forward

21. Councillor Graham Hinchey (Cabinet Member for Children & Families), Claire Marchant (Director of Social Services) and Deborah Driffield (Interim Assistant Director – Children’s Services) will present the report, copy attached at **Appendix A**, to the Committee and be available to answer member’s questions.

22. Members may wish to consider the Cabinet Report “Right Home, Right support – A Commissioning Strategy for Accommodation and Support for children Looked After”. together with any additional information presented at the meeting and provide Councillor Graham Hinchey Cabinet Member for Children & Families, and Director of Social Services with any comments, concerns or recommendations for consideration prior to the Cabinet meeting on 21 November 2019.

Legal Implications

23. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

Financial Implications

24. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION

- That Committee reviews draft strategy at **Appendix A** together with the information presented at the meeting and provide any recommendations, comments or advice to the Councillor Graham Hinchey Cabinet Member for Children & Families, and Director of Social Service with any comments, concerns or recommendations for consideration prior to the Cabinet Meeting on 26 September 2019.
- Identify any areas for consideration in the development of the Committee's work programme for 2019-2020

Davina Fiore

Director of Governance and Legal Services

2 November 2019