

CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

27 March 2023

Children Services Accommodation Strategy update

Reasons for the Report

1. This report has been prepared to provide the Committee with an update in relation to the Children's Services Accommodation Strategy in Cardiff.

Background

2. On the 19th January 2023 Cabinet approved the new Children's Services Strategy, which has been developed to set out the vision and direction for service provision over the next 3 years.
3. The Children's Services Strategy sets out how we will seek to work with our partners to meet the needs of children, young people and their families, using the least interventionist approach. We call this "shifting the balance" and we are focusing on three key areas:
 - a. Place – ensuring that children remain at home with their family where it is safe and appropriate to do so.
 - b. People – recruiting a permanent workforce and reducing our reliance on agency social workers.
 - c. Practice - developing our practice to ensure it is strength based, trauma informed, restorative, research led and family focused.
4. At Cardiff Children's Services our vision is clear – we want to provide families with the right support, from the right person at the right time, in the right place

and at the lowest safe level of intervention, enabling them to remain with their family where it is safe for them to do so.

5. However, for some children and young people their needs are best met in an accommodation setting and we want to ensure that there is enough sufficiency in Cardiff for them. All children and young people deserve to have a place they call home where they are safe, nurtured and protected.

6. The Accommodation Strategy, which was also approved at Cabinet on 19th January 2023 as an appendix to the main strategy, sets out the accommodation provision that we need. This strategy is closely linked with our work to implement The Right Place model in Cardiff (based on the North Yorkshire Model) and includes our ambitious plans to increase residential care provision for children and young people in Cardiff.

7. The strategy sets out how we will meet our commitments against the national context and the pressure areas that we need to address to meet local need. These are:
 - a. National context:**
 - i.** Provide additional specialist support for children with complex needs who may be on the edge of care.
 - ii.** Explore radical reform of current services for children looked after and care leavers.
 - iii.** Eliminate private profit from the care of children looked after.
 - iv.** Fund regional residential services for children with complex needs ensuring their needs are met as close to home as possible and in Wales wherever practicable.
 - b. Local pressures:**
 - i.** Mainstream children looked after.
 - ii.** Specialist mental health services and step-down from hospital.
 - iii.** Short break requirements for children with disabilities and complex need.

8. Accommodation Strategy is attached at Appendix A
9. Since the approval of the strategy there has been significant momentum in the delivery of new provision and this is included for committee in the The Accommodation Strategy Presentation which is attached at Appendix A (i)

Financial Implications

10. The strategy timespan is for three years and the accommodation strategy details additional properties to increase residential placement provision within the authorities boundaries. The acquisition of these properties will have a longer lifespan than the strategy, and when capital expenditure is being incurred, there will need to be a longer planning horizon, with a risk assessment and consideration of mitigations that might be required, to ensure that assets being bought, created or reconfigured will continue to provide benefits to the council over the lifespan of the asset. The accommodation strategy notes previous Capital allocations that have not been utilised to date and the possibility of external grants to fund the acquisition and adaptation of properties. Further work will be required to ensure the accommodation strategy is affordable within the current funding envelope and utilisation of grants are in accordance with timescales and the terms and conditions of the individual grants.
11. Currently there are significant cost pressures within Children's Services, as high-cost placements and bespoke care arrangements have arisen due to external changes since the pandemic and insufficient market capacity leading to increased prices. This strategy aims to manage and reduce the risk of significant overspends in future years through the implementation of several individual strands of work. Not included in the strategy is an implementation timetable or a risk assessment on the delivery of the strategy, which will need to be developed and delivered promptly to ensure corrective management actions can be taken to address the current financial challenges facing the service area and the authority. An appropriate financial monitoring mechanism will be required, aligned with performance indicators and delivery plans, to measure and communicate

financial performance and cost effectiveness of schemes deriving from the strategy and ensure ongoing management control of schemes.

Legal Implications

12. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is recommended to note the Children's Services Accommodation Strategy pilot to make any observations or comments and, if appropriate agree how the implementation of the Strategy is reported to this committee going forward.

DEBORAH DRIFFIELD

Director of Children's Services

21 March 2023