

# APPENDIX A



**CABINET – 13<sup>th</sup> December 2013**

**CHOICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE 2013:  
A Placement and Sufficiency Strategy for Children and Young  
People in Leicestershire's care**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE  
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE**

**Purpose of report**

1. The purpose of this report is to set out the County Council's strategic ambition to improve the current placement arrangements for our children in care and to secure 'permanence'<sup>1</sup> by, where possible, moving away from residential placements towards a family based care approach. The proposed Strategy is attached at Appendix A.

**Recommendations**

2. It is recommended that the Cabinet:
  - a. agrees the Strategy;
  - b. notes the need to read the Strategy in conjunction with the Permanence Policy (also being reported to the Cabinet on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2013);
  - c. agrees that the outcomes set out in the Strategy will be monitored through the relevant County Council Scrutiny arrangements.

**Reasons for recommendations**

3. Children and young people in the care of the County Council are amongst the most vulnerable groups in our community. When these children and young people come into our care we want to ensure that we undertake our parenting role with a passion and commitment that will keep them safe and ensure that they have the best possible support in life to enable them to reach their potential and become independent adults. Our Placement and Sufficiency Strategy is a key enabler to securing this intention.
4. In July 2013 changes were made to the statutory framework for looked after children. This makes it timely for the County Council to review its current arrangements regarding the way that it will achieve permanence for all looked after children, whether it is through planned and supported return home, family and friends care (known as 'connected care'), long term foster care or through a legal order such as residence, special guardianship or adoption.

---

<sup>1</sup> 'Permanence' is the term used to describe the combination of secure emotional attachment, physical stability and long term commitment.

# APPENDIX A

Ensuring that there are sufficient high quality placements that offer a breadth of choice for children and young people is crucial, as is ensuring that the resource available is efficiently used.

5. In September 2013 the Department for Education released new data about looked after children and also launched a consultation about improving permanence. New guidance will be published early in 2014 that will require local authorities to publish a local policy that outlines how they will achieve permanence for all looked after children. The Policy will need to reflect the strategic ambitions of the County Council.

## **Timetable for decisions (including Scrutiny)**

6. If agreed by the Cabinet, the Strategy will be monitored through the relevant Scrutiny process including by the Corporate Parenting Board.
7. The Strategy provides the basis for a new County Council Permanence Policy that will be presented to the Cabinet for agreement on 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2013. The Strategy and the Policy should be read in conjunction.

## **Policy framework and previous decisions**

8. The following legislation underpins the proposed new Strategy:
  - Children Act 1989
  - Care Standards Act 2000
  - Adoption and Children Act 2002
  - Children Act 2004
  - Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
  - Children and Young Person's Act 2008
  - Sufficiency: Statutory Guidance on Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children 2010
  - Guidance on the Provision of Accommodation for 16 and 17 year old people who may be homeless and/or require accommodation
  - Care Planning, Placement and Review Regulations 2010
  - Child Poverty Act 2010
  - National Minimum Standards for Adoption, Fostering and Children's Homes 2011
  - Ofsted inspection framework for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers 2013
9. In January 2010 the County Council made a 'Pledge' to its children and young people in care and care leavers that encompassed:
  - a) coming into care and changing placements
  - b) having a good experience of being in care
  - c) being listened to
  - d) being healthy
  - e) supporting education and personal development
  - f) being prepared for leaving care, independence and adulthood.
10. In September 2011 the County Council introduced a new Family and Friends Care Policy. This is required by statutory guidance and sets out the local authority's approach towards promoting and supporting the needs of looked

# APPENDIX A

after children and covers the assessments which will be carried out to determine the services required and how such services will then be provided

## **Resource implications**

11. The resource implications are set out in Section 10 of the proposed Strategy document. In summary, 50 residential placements currently cost the County Council £8m per year and 385 family carers cost £5.5m per year. The cost of ad hoc placements ranges from £800-£5,000 per week through the use of Independent Fostering Agencies. The recommendations in the proposed Strategy will enable the County Council to make more efficient use of its current resource.

## **Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

12. Not applicable.

## **Officers to contact**

13. Lesley Hagger, Interim Director, Children and Young People's Service.  
Tel: 0116 305 6340. [Lesley.Hagger@leics.gov.uk](mailto:Lesley.Hagger@leics.gov.uk)

Walter McCulloch, Assistant Director, Children and Young People's Service.  
Tel: 0116 305 7813. [Walter.mcculloch@leics.gov.uk](mailto:Walter.mcculloch@leics.gov.uk)

# APPENDIX A

## PART B

### Background

14. The numbers of children and young people in need of a child protection plan in Leicestershire is lower than comparative local authorities and the number of children in care continues to be the third lowest in the country. On 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013 there were 373 children and young people on plan and 435 looked after. Detailed information about current placements is set out in Section Two of the proposed Strategy and the eligibility criteria for 'in care' services is contained in Appendix 1.
15. Children and young people have the right, where possible, to be brought up within their own family, either with their parents, relatives or people they already have a relationship with. However, when this is not possible and the state needs to intervene it is important to consider how best to identify the right placement for each child or young person early in their care journey. National data demonstrates that too many children experience placement instability or placement drift because care planning is often not good enough. This is why the government will introduce a requirement for local authorities to produce a Permanence Policy. This also fits with the new Ofsted inspection framework for looked after children services which includes a focus on the quality of care planning, the review and support for children in care and care leavers, and placement stability.
16. In September 2013 the Department for Education published: 'Improving Permanence for Looked After Children'. This is a data pack that provides detail about placements for looked after children and those who return home and is the result of data collected from all local authorities in England. This data provides important messages about placement instability and children who experience the unstable nature of care when a return home fails. While achieving timely permanence is desirable, annual data returns show that a small but substantial number of children still experience multiple placements each year. In addition, too many children who return home to their families also do so without the support and services they need, resulting in further abuse or neglect and re-entry to care. This data has informed the proposed Leicestershire Strategy, and in particular the Values and Principles set out in Section One.
17. The current approach to placement commissioning in Leicestershire has evolved historically. This does not provide for the most efficient or effective use of our current resource and does not provide the range of choice for children and young people to achieve permanence. Section Three of the proposed Strategy sets out the need for a new approach.
18. Section Five of the proposed Strategy sets out a number of conclusions, recommendations and deliverables. These underpin the vision that in Leicestershire "all children and young people in care will have the opportunity to live and thrive in family-based care within the right family or environment, and that the choices about their care will be based on their own needs and wishes, will be focused on their outcomes, and will be made with carers that have a commitment to sustaining relationships and achieving permanence."

# APPENDIX A

## **Background Papers**

19. Report to the Cabinet:  
10<sup>th</sup> February 2012: Proposed reduction of Leicestershire's in-house residential provision for children and young people.

Reports to the Children and Young People's Service Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

19<sup>th</sup> November 2012: Performance Report on Fostering Service;  
Performance Report on Adoption Service.

4<sup>th</sup> March 2013: Report on out county specialist placements for children in care and children with special educational needs.

## **Relevant Impact Assessments**

20. A formative Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and there are no negative factors indicated from this Policy approach.

## **Equal Opportunities**

21. The Public Sector Equality Duty supports the implementation of this Policy ensuring that children and young people receive services that take into account their race, culture, language, disability, religion, and sexual orientation.

## **Risk Assessment**

22. The Policy will improve care planning and placement stability and thereby should reduce any risk to the County Council.