



CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 4 JUNE 2019

PROGRESS MADE AGAINST THE CARE PLACEMENT STRATEGY
2018-2021

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY
SERVICES

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update around the work on the Care Placement Strategy 2018-2021.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The Care Placement Strategy is an overarching document which brings together key departmental strategies within the overall pathway of edge of care through to leaving care. The Care Placement Strategy is overseen by the Care Placement Strategy Board which reports to the Children and Family Services Department Management Team.

Background

3. Leicestershire is ambitious for its children and aspires to provide high quality services which meet their needs. For children in care, Leicestershire aims to provide good quality placements to ensure stability and quality of care that enables children to thrive and meet their full potential. The Care Placement Strategy (attached as Appendix A to this report) outlines the County Council's ambition for how it will design, develop, deliver and commission services of a high quality that place children and their needs at the centre.
4. The Children and Family Services Continuous Improvement Plan (The Road to Excellence), arising from the OFSTED inspection 2016, identified a number of areas for change. In addition to this, a number of key national and local drivers underpinned the need for local authorities to look innovatively at what is being delivered to children in care.
5. In developing the Care Placement Strategy, the Children and Family Services Department worked with key corporate colleagues to review pathways of care to ensure that both internal and external services have a shared understanding of the needs of vulnerable children. This includes children with disabilities and complex needs and those with complex challenging behaviour.

6. The ambition is to offer flexible, responsive services that work towards improved outcomes for children and families in Leicestershire. The Care Placement Strategy sets out the Department's vision, priorities and key principles that will inform and drive the strategy. The Strategy is made up of key components: Edge of Care, Care Placement Sufficiency (including fostering recruitment and retention, residential and permanence and adoption), Leicestershire's offer to Care Leavers and commissioning arrangements.
7. The Care Placement Strategy Board, chaired by the Director of Children and Family Services, was established in 2018 and meets monthly to receive and consider progress reports against the key components.

Children's Innovation Partnership

8. In 2018, innovative work was undertaken by the County Council to explore establishing a partnership that would enable more creative working to design and develop services for children, young people and their families. A tendering process was undertaken and in December 2018, the County Council entered into an innovation partnership with Barnardo's. This has resulted in the co-location of a strategic lead from Barnardo's with the Senior Management Team in Children and Family services.
9. Joint working has taken place across the partnership, to review pathways and look at how the ambition of providing high quality services for children and their families can be achieved. This is the first such partnership of its kind.
10. Although the Children's Innovation Partnership (CIP) is very new, and data on its impact is not yet available, there have already been some developments that demonstrate how working in collaboration has made accessing support more agile and strengthened its ability to offer flexible and responsive services. Examples include:
 - Successful application to the Department for Education (DfE) - Grants to fund the local co-ordination of free holiday activities and healthy food for disadvantaged children. £798,000 has been awarded, and the scope is to help approximately 2,500 young people received four weeks of free activities and healthy food.
 - Engagement/Delivery of Barnardo's Independent Child Trafficking Advocacy Training for Foster Carers to enhance Foster Care provision for the authority.
 - Barnardo's sponsorship of £650 for a joint branding opportunity to demonstrate the partnership on the Leicestershire's School Children's Art Calendar 2020.
 - £500 contribution from Barnardo's towards the Leicestershire Adverse Childhood Experiences conference.
11. Leicestershire was nominated as a finalist for the GO Awards in the category of Innovation in Procurement and was highly commended at the awards ceremony on 30 April. The UK National GO Awards represent those

individuals, teams and organisations that have gone above and beyond normal standards to make real differences to the quality of public service in the UK.

12. The Innovation Partnership is testament to the ambition within the County Council to provide high quality services. This work has been key to driving forward key elements of the Care Placement Strategy.

Progress to date

Edge of care

13. The ambition is that wherever it is safe to do so, families should be supported to care for their children; and children should be afforded the chance to grow up with their family. Within Children and Family Services this ethos runs throughout the work and practice undertaken by Early Help and Children's Social Care (CSC). Recent redesigns in Early Help (Family and Wellbeing Service) and in Social Care locality teams to strengthen practice, supports the work to build family resilience and to keep children safe within their family network.
14. Work is underway to further develop the role of Family Intervention Workers in CSC locality teams to work intensively with families to improve children's outcomes and build family resilience. The work will focus on children on the edge of care, to both prevent family breakdown and support rehabilitation back to the family of those young people in care who are able, with support, to return home.
15. Whilst the number of Children in Care has grown, the growth is steadier than forecast and remains below that of Leicestershire's statistical neighbours. Key decision-making panels, management oversight and quality assurance audits ensure that the right decision is being made for those children who need to come into care and those that can be supported within their family.
16. The Short breaks offer to families has been improved and detailed work is underway to look at how the department works with vulnerable mothers who have had babies removed from their care and placed for adoption. A review of 16/17 year olds who are homeless and the support to them is also part of this work.

Care Placement Sufficiency

17. The innovation partnership with Barnardo's has helped in developing a design brief for what placement types are needed to support children and young people in care.
18. To date, three service design brief meetings have been held with senior staff across the service, and work to include stakeholders and the voice of young people has been undertaken. A small group of operational managers is now established and is meeting weekly to work on detailed proposals around how to deliver placements, and what the make-up of placement choice needs to be will

be available by June 2019. This includes residential provision both delivered or commissioned by the County Council.

Foster Carer Recruitment and Retention

19. Over the last 12 months there has been increased and improved activity in the recruitment and retention of Foster Carers. Recruitment campaigns are being continually reviewed and refreshed, and the retention of carers continues to improve. In 2018/19, 25 new foster carer households were approved, and in the same period, eight specialist carers were approved.
20. The Dedicated Placement Support Team continues to provide support, where possible, to young people and carers who are struggling to prevent placement breakdown. The team provides 24/7 support which has been both well received and successful in preventing a number of placement break downs.
21. Last year the team worked with 74 young people; this included work to stabilise placements, support children to return home and moving young people on to either their own accommodation or to other placements.
22. Two young people moved from residential placements to Supported Lodgings and six young people went to Supported Lodgings placements as an alternative to residential care. Three young people have moved into either One2One carers or pathway carers instead of moving into residential placements. Two young people have moved from residential care into One2One placements. The team also successfully returned a child home from a residential placement.
23. The annual Foster Carer's Survey confirmed that the improvements made to support training and the revised fee structure has been well received.

Multi Intensive Systemic Team Leicestershire (MISTLE)

24. In June 2018, as part of an invest to save initiative by the County Council, Action for Children won a tender to establish a MISTLE team to work with identified children in the care of the local authority. A multi-disciplinary therapeutic team has been established and to date is working closely with 10 young people (in addition, it has provided consultation to workers on a number of other young people).
25. The main focus of the work in this initial period has been to support identified young people to move successfully from residential care to family-based placements- either foster care, their family network or where appropriate, for older young people to live in supported independent accommodation. To date, one young person has successfully returned home, one has moved to a Supported Lodging, one has moved from residential to a foster placement and one is now ready to move to foster care with the process of identifying possible carers underway.
26. Members of the MISTLE team have been involved in the recruitment and training of Foster Carers. An interim report on the progress of this model is

currently being prepared and will be presented to Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny in the Autumn.

Care Leavers

27. Work has been successfully completed with children in care, care leavers and partners to revise the pledge in line with additional responsibilities for care leavers up to the age of 25. The Promise, which outlines what the County Council will provide children in care and care leavers with, was launched on 1 April 2019 at an event attended by the Chairman, Lead member, Elected Members, officers, partner agencies and young people. The Promise is attached as Appendix B.
28. Key areas have been mapped and priorities are identified as health and wellbeing, accommodation and support and Education, Employment and Training. Work is underway in all key areas and progress will be reported to the Children and Families Partnership and Corporate Parenting Board. A support visit from the Department for Education National Advisor for Care Leavers in February reported that the department is ambitious and aspirational for young people and that this is evident from Elected Members, leaders in the council, senior officers and throughout the workforce. The areas the department had identified for further work were confirmed by the visit and work in this area continues to progress at a good rate.
29. Key areas of success to date is the agreement across the District Councils to exempt care leavers from Council tax until the age of 25, and to help support them to establish themselves in the community. Further success has been the increased opportunities for young people in care/ care leavers to be supported on apprenticeships.

Consultation

30. Consultation with key stakeholders takes place throughout all key elements of work being undertaken to deliver The Care Placement Strategy.

Resource Implications

31. Resources have been identified to support the work to deliver key elements of The Care Placement Strategy. This will be kept under review as developments progress.

Conclusions

32. Progress is underway to deliver against the key elements of The Care Placement Strategy 2018- 2021. This report provides an overview on the progress made to date in the first 12 months of the strategy.

Background Papers

None

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

None

Equality and Human Rights Implications

33. The Strategy aims to meet the needs of vulnerable children, young people and their families. It ensures equality of access to services and that services are designed to take into account race, language, cultural, religious, sexual orientation and disability needs.

Appendices

Appendix A: The Care Placement Strategy 2018-2021.

Appendix B: The Promise to children in care and care leavers.

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