

# People Scrutiny Commission

6<sup>th</sup> December 2023



**Report of:** Vanessa Wilson, Director of Children and Education Transformation

**Title:** Children and Education – Our Families Programme Update on Demand Pressures

**Officer Presenting Report:** Vanessa Wilson, Director of Children and Education Transformation

**Appendix A**



## Appendix A

### Children’s Homes Sufficiency - mitigations

Our programme seeks to develop children’s placement sufficiency in the city, including children’s homes (including crisis homes and disabled children’s homes) and supported accommodation to address revenue base budget pressure in 23/24 of £7.5m. This will enable:

- Increased local sufficiency for children in care and care leavers.
- Improved stability for children in residential care and the ability to ensure these homes remain safely at full capacity best utilising the resource.
- Reduced usage of high-cost unregistered placements.
- Reduction of 16- and 17-year-olds coming into care through the availability of crash pad/assessment provision.
- Increased availability of provision to support children and young people to transition smoothly from residential provision, or for those with more complex needs.
- Focused development of a service supporting children to move out of hospital (or similar) into suitable registered accommodation.
- Increased availability of suitable provision in Bristol for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

### Our aim is to:

- Prevent children coming into care where possible and safe to do so, including those aged 16+ who have been judged to be homeless.
- Increase local sufficiency of children’s homes and supported accommodation for children in care and care leavers to enable children to live in the city they grew up in.
- Improve Stability for children in residential care.
- Reduce usage of high-cost unregistered placements.
- Deliver value for money services that achieve savings and address the placement budget overspend.

Our Sufficiency Strategy and Strategic Partner paper outline our intentions and will accelerate our plans and reduce our reliance on high-cost out of area placements and increased budget pressures.

### Children’s Homes

- Assess property disposals with a large footprint that can be used for developing Childrens Homes Accommodation. Retain and develop for alternative use or enter into a partnership with a provider.
- A home to support children with mental health needs to live in the community through a collaborative model of delivery with Health, Education and Social Care. These children will have experienced acute Health settings and require clinical and social care to enable discharge and/or to prevent hospital admission and re-admission. The rationale for this programme is to address the high number of children with mental health needs being hospitalised.
- A new home for adolescent boys aged 15-17+ with a history with challenging and aggressive behaviour. This will provide a therapeutic treatment setting for restorative care, for young men with criminal justice involvement and where exploitation is part of their risk profile. The

home will include two self-contained pods in the grounds as preparation for independent living. The rationale for this programme is to address the current issue in that we have more adolescent males placed out of area than females and presenting issues tend to be confrontation, substance misuse.

### **Disabled Children's Homes**

- Assess property disposals with a large footprint to identify property can be used for developing a Disabled Children's Home. Retain and develop for in-house use or enter into a partnership with a provider.
- Bristol has no residential disabled children's homes or residential special schools, following the closure of the city's only residential special school in 2019. Through market shaping, we know that the cost of accommodation in Bristol is a barrier as is the difficulty in recruiting staff.

### **Crisis/Same-Day Home**

- Establish emergency children social care assessment and/or stabilisation unit, open 24/7 including overnight bed.
- This home could take children being placed in emergencies, where little is known about the young person and therefore a period of assessment is required both to settle and assess their needs for onwards referrals. These young people currently often end up in either very high cost external placements, or in unregistered provision.
- This would also support delivery of PACE duties for which we currently have no service and would enable us to support children where immediate notice is given by carers/providers as well as providing assessment base for children where no accommodation is available despite lengthy searches.

### **Garden pods**

- Create additional capacity at homes through construction of garden rooms / pods for young people aged 16-18+ to stay put and successfully move to independence at a time of their choice. This will offer a structured pathway for young people to transition from residential care to semi-independence, offering an intermediary step, providing a supportive environment while fostering independence.
- This will reduce long-term financial commitments by preparing young people for successful transitions and avoid moves to high-cost ESAs.

### **External Supported Accommodation**

- We are seeking first refusal of properties being disposed of by Registered Providers (RP) or other public bodies within the City (acquisition, lease, rent) to create additional ESA provision within the city at affordable cost.
- Increasing the range of ESA provision will enable us ensure that young people are in the right placement for their needs, at a reasonable cost.

### **UASC under 18 and over 18 Move- On Accommodation**

- We are seeking acquisition fund to purchase residential properties and / or larger residential multi-functional properties. This may sit in Housing (General Needs) or with Children's Services for asylum seekers under 18, many of whom are housed in ESAs. We will explore the purchase

of 8-10 bed HMOs where we will locate suitable, culturally appropriate services to support integration and move-on.

### **Prevent 16/17-year-olds judged as homeless coming into care for the first time**

- Acquire, renovate or lease, a large property or former council operational asset, to establish a Crash Pad for 16- to 18-year-olds-leaving care, experiencing family breakdown, pregnancy, relationship breakdowns or rough sleeping.
- Investment in a crash pad will create capacity for assessments and prevent the commissioning of expensive ESAs where primary need is homelessness and vulnerability has been discounted through assessment.

### **Foster Carers Sufficiency**

Our ambition is to offer our children of Bristol the same as we might hope for our own children. A home in Bristol full of love and care where there is opportunity to be loved, to have fun, to make mistakes and to grow up and contribute to our city as a well-rounded adult.

The outcome we are seeking through this project through the delivery of Our Families Programme and through our Building Fostering and Children Home Sufficiency strategy we want to:

- Increase local sufficiency to deliver a better local experience for the children of Bristol and at the same time provide better value for money services that will save the local authority a significant amount and address the significant overspend in our placement budget for children.
- Reduce the dependence on expensive Independent Foster Agencies
- Increase the number of foster homes for children through building extensions/ home building changes and other initiatives.
- Create additional capacity with current foster carers home by construction of extensions, garden room / pod, general adaptations etc.
- Create additional capacity with current foster carers through improved transport and facilities. e.g loan for a vehicle and furnishings/white goods e.g. large capacity washing machine

### **Adaptions, Extensions, Transport and Equipment/White Goods:**

- This could be applied to alterations, adaptations, or improvements to foster carers' homes or the provision or adaptation of suitable vehicles or other equipment to enable them to meet Standard 10 (Providing a suitable physical environment for the child) of the Fostering Services National Minimum Standards 2011.
- Similar capital expenditure will also be considered in the case of children placed by way of adoption, kinship, Child Arrangements Order or Special Guardianship where this increases the likelihood of permanency for children who may be hard to place e.g. children with complex care needs or sibling groups.
- Any capital expenditure will be based on the assessment of the needs of the child/young person to ensure that children and young people are cared for in, appropriate environments that meet their specific needs.

The types of adaptations or extension which Bristol City Council may contribute towards will depend on the presenting need. We will consider (but not limit considerations to):

- Partition walls

- Loft conversions
- Single storey extensions
- Garden pod - providing new self-contained space in settings to support complex need young people
- General adaptations to stairs, doorways etc

#### **Loans for Vehicles or Adaptations to Vehicles:**

- Loans for the purchase or adaptation of a vehicle will be for a maximum amount of £8,000. The granting of a loan will be for those carers who have been approved to care for a number of children/young people that together with existing permanent family members, who reside in the same property, require a vehicle larger than their current vehicle.
- It will also include the purchase or adaptation of a vehicle to allow a child/young person with complex needs to be safely transported.

#### **Housing Provision for Complex Teenagers:**

##### Option 1:

- Identifying a house/houses that we could move foster carers into to care for complex teens or sibling groups (if their own house wasn't suitable or the risks were too high). We could use this model for parent and child also and could recruit specifically for carers for specific children in this way.

##### Option 2:

- Creating a system of a set amount of Local Authority properties each year put aside for the use of families who need to move to larger homes in order to foster or adopt a child.