Slough Children First Sufficiency Strategy

Sufficiency duty

The Sufficiency Duty (Section 22G of the Children Act 1989) requires all Local Authorities (LAs) to take strategic actions to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for children in their care within their local authority area, and for those children who require accommodation to promote their welfare; that meets their needs.

Each statutory partner as determined under Section 10 are *'required to co-operate with the local authority in making those arrangements'.*

Right Home, in the **Right Place**, at the **Right Time**

Corporate Parenting Priorities

1. Supporting engagement and achievement in education, training, and employment.

2. Ensuring that our children looked after and care experienced young people have stable homes and the right help.

3. We will listen and respond to the voice of our children, young people, and care experienced young people. They will help to develop and shape our strategic plans and delivery of services.

4. Ensuring that our children, young people, and care experienced young people are healthy. We will help our children and care experienced young people to have access to help for their physical needs and emotional wellbeing.

5. Developing a highly effective Care Leavers partnership to provide ongoing help in a variety of ways for them.

6. Supporting children, young people and care experienced young people to have fun and have new experiences to develop their own interests.

Sufficiency Priorities

- **Strengthen Early Help, Edge of Care and reunification**

- **Fostering – recruitment, retention and development**

- **Robust commissioning framework**

- **Achieving Permanence at the earliest opportunity**

- **Leaving care**

Strengthen Early Help, Edge of Care and reunification

✓ Proportionate early help and edge of care services to support families to make sustained change and prevent escalation and children being taken into care – 'intensive' targeted support.

✓ Creating an Edge of Care team, supporting families to stay together and be reunified

✓ Resisting all admissions to care for children aged 15+; unless significant and critical safeguarding risk

✓ Intense Edge of Care services to support reunification if children can return to their homes; impact for children in the 8 to 13y age group
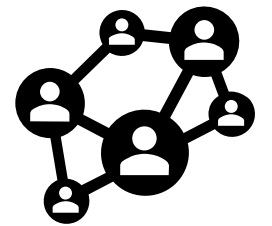
Fostering – recruitment, retention & development

✓ Revision of our communication and marketing strategy for the recruitment of foster carers; ambitious and targeted approach

✓ Develop a fostering model specifically focussed for children with more complex needs; preventing the need for residential care (step forward/Resilience fostering model)

✓ Increase foster carer training and development opportunities; strengthening their skill set

✓ Rebrand our fostering service to create a clear vision and imagery to support recruitment - 'Our Slough Family'

Robust commissioning framework

✓ Introduce a robust commissioning framework for all types of provision; improving arrangements with local providers and reducing the reliance on spot purchase provision

✓ Aim to provide homes for children in Slough and in their local area

✓ Working closely with local providers to reshape the market and increase availability of homes in Slough

✓ Improve our commissioning and contract management through External Placement Panel and tracking process'

✓ Work with health partners to develop a range of appropriate services to ensure emotional and mental health needs are met

Achieving Permanence at the earliest opportunity

- ✓ Providing children with long-term placement stability, where appropriate leave care, return home or seek legal permanence via other arrangements e.g. SGO

- ✓ Review and redesign of our Placement Service

- ✓ Strengthening our assessment of connected carers at the point of viability (Reg, 24 process)

- ✓ Introduce a centralised Permanency Monitoring Group

- ✓ Review our Stability meeting process in practice

- ✓ Ensure transition planning with adults' services are robust and provide early identification of need
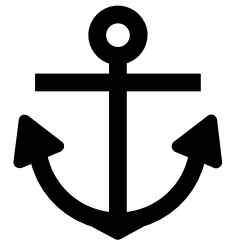
Leaving Care

- ✓ Further develop effective partnerships with housing providers across the borough, creating a joint Care Leaver strategy for the provision of cost effective, safe and good quality housing

- ✓ Improve the range of supported accomodation options for care experienced young people

- ✓ Support and encourage young people to remain in their placements to at least 17 ½ or until they are ready to move on; for some Staying Put. A small cohort will require earlier transition planning to accomodation appropriate to their individual needs.

- ✓ Ensure transition planning for children with complex needs commences at 16y or before; involving partnership working with adults' services

- ✓ With our commissioing service undertake market warming, seeking opportunities to support young people access private let homes; recognising that social housing is limited at this time.
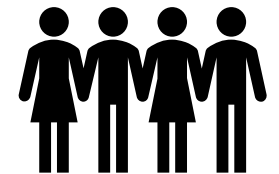
Demand data (some key headings)

- CLA rates per 10'000 has increased over 5y (2018-2022); Eng 64 to 70, SE 51 to 56 – 9% - Slough now in-line with SN's – increase in UASC (43 in 2022/23)

- 6% (167) National increase in children's homes; smaller increase than previous 2 years (1% in real terms – 5% increase in previous years) – currently 55 CLA from other LA's placed in Slough

- 26% of children looked after are placed more than 20 miles from the borough (reduction of 6% on previous year but higher than Eng, SN ave.)

- 68% CLA because of abuse and neglect – 55% aged between 11 & 17y

- 16% CLA due to absent parenting – 16 to 17y (2022/23 – 7% rise on prev. yr)

- 40% (85 (38 UASC)) of all CLA are teenagers (16 & 17y) – 2/3 male

- For over 5y children aged below 1y is 1/3 higher than Eng, SE, SN

Demand data (some key headings)

- Of children exiting care, 2023 saw the lowest number of children returning home at 15% (55% in 2020, 38% in 2022)

- 60% of CLA population male – increasing from ages 5-10y, and 11-15y

- 64% of Slough's communities from ethnic minorities; CLA population broadly similar

- 16% (41) of CLA and 14% (23) of CEYP have a diagnosed medical need or disability (e.g. Autism/Aspergers)

- 10% (25) of CLA and 14% (13) of CEYP have a Neuro Divergent need (e.g autism spectrum disorder/ADHD)

- No. of Children entering care and cumulative net change has increased over recent years; however, number of episodes of children entering care has increased and 'individual' entries into care are slightly lower – indicating repeat episodes of care.

Demand data (some key headings)

- Children exiting care, after 1-2y and 2y+ has increased over recent years, 5% and 10% respectively (5y trend)

- 64% (164) CLA live with foster carers; 9.5% of which are connected carers, 17% internal IFA, 38% external IFA, with an increasing demand (March 23)

- Of the above, 15% - 5-10y, 19% - 11-15y and 16% - 16-17y

- 6% (15) live in children's residential homes (March 23) – between 2021 and 2023 there was a decrease however this is increasing (21 in Sept 23)

- 8.4% of children have had 3 or more placement moves, slightly lower than comparator groups; however, long term placement stability is at least 7% lower than comparators

- Significant increase in demand for semi-independent provision – 43 in 2021 to 74 in 2023

Next steps

Governance

Corporate Parenting Panel

SCF Board

Executive; Getting to Good Board

Su fficiency Project Board - engine room

Practice

Work streams & Project Leads

- Edge of Care

  (Head of Service; Safeguarding & Family Support**)**

- Commissioning

  (Head of Service; Commissioing Lead)

- Fostering Recruitment & Retention

  (Head of Service; Regulated Services)

- Achieving Permanence

  (Head of Service; Sufficiency & Permanency)

- Leaving Care

  (HoS; Children Looked After & Support Service)

Any questions…