

# Children, Young People and Families a **BRIGHTER** future



## **PLACEMENT & SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN IN CARE 2020-2023**



## Document revision control

Version	Author/editor	Notes	Date Published
2014-2017 Strategy	Richard Lynch / Pete Howell		Final version published May 2014
2016-2019 Strategy	Richard Lynch	Strategy revised in light of increasing CIC & CP population	Final version published April 2016
2018-2020 Strategy	RL / Adrian Hobson / Jon Banwell P&SS Team	Narrative, targets and financials updated to reflect 2018/19 delivery	April 2018
2018-2020 (updated)	SS / Leanne Winter / Jon Banwell / P&SS Team	Narrative, targets and financials updated to reflect 2019/20 delivery	May 2019
2020-2023 Strategy	Jon Banwell / Leanne Winter / P&SS Team	Narrative, targets and financials updated to reflect 2020/21 delivery	June 2020

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**Date of document: 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020**

**Date of strategy review: Quarterly reporting. Date of next refresh April 2021**

Sufficiency is an essential element of delivering our pledge to the children and young people of Barnsley.

### **Barnsley's Pledge for Children in Care**

**Children in Care are one of the most vulnerable groups in our society. It is the responsibility of the local authority as corporate parents, to support each of them as individuals in order to enable them to achieve their maximum potential.**

**We take the role of corporate parents very seriously in Barnsley. This is emphasised through Barnsley's Pledge for Children in Care and our local offer to Care Leavers.**

**Our pledge contains six promises:**

- 1. We will look after Children in Care in a safe and caring home**
- 2. We will promote, support, and respect the identity of Children in Care**
- 3. We will ensure that Children in Care receive a good education**
- 4. We will support Children in Care to be healthy**
- 5. We will prepare Children in Care for adulthood**
- 6. We will involve Children in Care in making it happen**

#### **[Our pledge to children in care](https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/services/children-families-and-education/children-in-care/our-pledge-to-children-in-care/)**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION.

The 2020-2023 strategy has been refreshed to respond to current and emerging challenges in order to ensure that we can meet the accommodation and support needs of children in care in the most effective way possible.

Commissioners of services for children in the care of Barnsley MBC continue to face a number of challenges over the coming period to support the delivery of the promises outlined above. The most pressing of these are:

- To ensure accommodation of sufficient quality and volume which satisfies our ambition to improve outcomes for children in care;
- To ensure maximum value for money in providing accommodation and support amid significant resource pressures and national challenges;
- To ensure the needs of children can continue to be met particularly those children and young people with very complex needs;
- To develop the local market for accommodation and support of children in care to ensure children can be cared for in line with our ambitions and as near to home as possible.

The Children and Young People's Trust is committed to the continued investment in early intervention, prevention and 'edge of care' services; to avoid, wherever possible, unnecessary admission to care. The priorities identified by all partners are:

- That children and young people are supported to remain with their families and communities wherever possible and enter the care system only when absolutely necessary;
- That children and young people who are admitted to care will receive high quality support to remain in care only for as long as is necessary to ensure successful reintegration to their families and communities and;
- That where children and young people do spend time in care, the experience is a positive one which will help them to realise their potential and achieve successful outcomes.

Planning for Children in Care (CIC) will continue to be carried out jointly with all relevant partners to ensure we effectively maintain our focus on all aspects of children and young people's lives. We particularly want to improve health and educational attainment outcomes and the numbers of care leavers in education, training and employment.

Overall CIC numbers have remained reasonably stable throughout 2019/20 and have been consistent within the strategy's guideline target of 300. The number of

CIC at the end of 2019/20 was 303.

Work done locally in 2014-15 to re-define and articulate thresholds across the children and young people's workforce has resulted in a stabilising of numbers of families supported through Child Protection Plans (CPP). The period since the publication of the last version of the strategy has also seen a stabilising of numbers of children in care at around 300. A strong Early Help and targeted support offer has positively contributed to how we meet need appropriately at the earliest opportunity to prevent escalation. Further work to recognise and support vulnerable adolescents and develop the contextualised safeguarding approach will also help to shape early intervention and support.

A characteristic of the challenge in meeting needs is the complex nature of caring for older children and adolescents. For the second consecutive year there has been an increase in the number of adolescents becoming Children in Care (CIC), 149 at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 from 128 at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 which equates to a 14% increase. An older care cohort often includes some children with more complex needs and therefore requiring more intensive and specialist support.

This Placement and Sufficiency Strategy for Children in Care 2020-2023 identifies how the Children and Young People's Trust will meet these challenges to ensure that children in the care of Barnsley MBC experience the highest possible quality of service provided within the context of achieving maximum value for money.

### **What has changed during 2019/20?**

- Careful analysis of longer-term trends of entry to care and children subject to a child protection plan have accurately predicted that our care population would stabilize around a new norm of 300. One of the objectives of the strategy was to create a system with sufficient resilience to cope with this increase and to continue to invest in preventing entry into care through developing family support, early intervention and prevention.
- During 2019/20 the number of children who are looked after has remained largely stable and has often been below our sufficiency target of 300. Throughout the year the highest month end number of Children in Care was 316 at December 2019 in comparison the lowest number was 295 at the end of August 2019.
- Despite the fluctuation in numbers, Barnsley's Children in Care number is still well managed and as a proportion of the population (59.7 per 10,000) compares favorably to statistical neighbours average rates (102.5 per 10,000) and below the national average of 65.0 per 10,000. This is achieved through robust care management and permanency planning for children, exiting them out of the care system where it is appropriate and safe to do so.

- Challenges continue to be faced with regards to the availability of placements for older children and adolescents. This is in the context of a national situation which has seen increasing CIC numbers and a resulting demand on suitable care placements which can often lead to the only available option being high cost residential provisions.
- As numbers in the care system have increased nationally the best means of mitigating costs is to ensure we can respond effectively to local demand by improving how we manage placements, achieving a significant increase in local foster carer capacity and the judicious use of local, independent foster care arrangements.
- The current profile of placements has also changed from that envisaged in the original strategy. As detailed previously there has been a shift within the cohort towards older CIC this is as a result of children in long-term placements growing older. Where an older child comes into care at a late stage or a long-term placement ends this places considerable additional pressures on resources and on the placements market, particularly when trying to secure placements possessing a thorough understanding of adolescent risk. A demand issue which is reflected regionally and indeed nationally. The situation in Barnsley has been exacerbated by the increase in demand for placements within borough from other local authorities. For a small borough, Barnsley has a disproportionately high number of children in care placed in the borough by other Local Authorities with 209 placed as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020. This has made it more difficult to source independent placements locally and impacts on universal, specialist and targeted service provision within the borough.
- Barnsley's performance in relation to in-house foster carers as opposed to the use of Independent Fostering Agencies showed significant improvement in 2019 (an increase from 65% to 68%). This was as a result of the very successful recruitment campaign in 2017/18 which added around 40 additional foster carers to the in-house cohort. At one point 75% of all children in foster placements were with in-house carers and this remains the aim of the sufficiency strategy. To ensure a high quality of support for the new in-house carers and assist in the future retention of carers an additional 3 members of staff within the Fostering service was completed during 2019/20.
- Barnsley's excellent performance in terms of adoption and alternative permanence arrangements makes a strong contribution to maintaining the number of children in long-term care at the expected target of 300. In 19/20 adoptive placements have been secured for 26% of our children who have left care which is significantly above the national average, last reported at 12% for England.

- A considerable proportion of our children leaving care are placed with their extended family or other connected persons subject to SGO. In 2019/20 34 SGOs were made, the exact same number as Adoption Orders made in the same period. Supporting extended family members to take on SGO arrangements is often the preferred outcome for children and young people.
- The ongoing monitoring of demand by the Fostering service indicates that we currently have sufficient carers for short term placements where the long-term plan for the children is often adoption or placements with relatives. The greatest challenge is to recruit foster carers who want to care for children aged 5 and over who need long term placements. Extensive work is being done by the Fostering service to encourage current in-house carers to consider placements for this cohort including offering additional training relating to adolescent behaviours and encouraging new carers to consider long-term placements. All new in-house foster carers will be approved without defining by either short or long term.
- Throughout 2019/20 the service has managed the level of demand for semi-independent placements below the Placement Sufficiency target of 8, the average number of placements throughout the year has been 5. In 2018/19 a significant spike in the numbers of young people placed in semi-independent provision resulted in increased budget pressures. Close management and oversight of semi-independent provision has, in 2019/20, contributed to reducing this pressure.
- The Yorkshire and Humber Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) Transfer Regional Rota is now in operation. Yorkshire and Humber has seen an increase in spontaneous arrivals of UASC. The area's most acutely affected are local authorities along the East coast where individual and groups of unaccompanied children are arriving at ports. This is leading to a divergence in UASC number across the region.

The rota transfers newly arrived UASC from the 'entry' local authority area which is above its 0.07 threshold to other 'receiving' areas with greater capacity to support UASC. The scheme is based on a simple calculation of the difference between number of UASC already in the area, and the area's 0.07 threshold, and the number of transfers in each 'round' calculated accordingly. Barnsley's distribution by UASC placement capacity is 1 per round.

It is difficult to predict the numbers of UASC that will transfer to Barnsley as this will depend on the numbers that present as UASC. This strategy assumes that there will be up to 5 young people transferred to Barnsley during 2020/21. Government provides Local authorities looking after UASC with £114 per person per night for each UASC in their care.

## **Summary of progress**

In our previous strategy we identified four key outcomes. Our progress against each of these outcomes is detailed below:

### **Reduce the reliance on external foster placements**

#### **Progress:**

- The number of children in external foster placements in March 2020 was 75, this is above the KPI figure of 60 and reflects the overspend in the fostering budget detailed later in this document.
- The number of children placed with external foster carers has increased steadily during 2019/20. This is reversing a trend seen over the previous 2 years and is a result of a reduction in recruitment of long-term foster carers (other than connected persons) during 2019 coupled with a sudden increase in children coming into care for a period in late 2019. Measures are in place to ensure a return to the previous downward trend which will be overseen by the Placement Sufficiency Board.
- The increased number of older children being in Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements corresponds with the overall trend of looked after children becoming older. Of those looked after children with IFA carers 65.3% are aged 10 or over mostly as a result of being placed long-term as younger children. The Fostering Service is continuing to work on recruiting more in-house carers who can take long-term placements and older children coming into care for the first time
- We have worked successfully with regional partners through the White Rose Commissioning Consortium to manage, and in some cases reduce, unit costs for the provision of Independent Fostering Agencies placements and have mitigated the impact of inflationary costs through robust contract management procedures.

### **Continue to increase the number and choice of internal foster placements**

#### **Progress:**

- We continue to innovate in our approach to recruiting and retaining local authority foster carers. The number of in-house fostering households has increased from 141 in March 2019 to 147 March 2020. The significant increase in numbers since 2018 demonstrates progress made by the service which prior to 2018 had not exceeded 100 in-house carers for a sustained period.
- The time taken to carry out foster carer assessments continues to be better than the national average. The national average figure published by the Fostering Network in 2017 was 241 days (still the latest figure available)



and at that time Barnsley was operating at an average of 200 days. During 2017/18 the service achieved an average of 125. In 2019/20 this has increased to 170 days as a result of some particularly complex assessments. This is still only 5 days outside of the government target. However, the in-house target for the service continues to be 125 days and measures are in place to improve performance in 20/21. There is now a full complement of assessors and they have developed their role to include the early response to initial enquiries.

- Our in-house Fostering service has seen a net increase of 2 placements across 2019/20. Throughout the year, the service has approved a total of 25 new carer households including Connected Persons.
- The Service has also received 23 resignations throughout the year. This is well above the expected natural wastage which, for the size of service we have, based on previous on years' figures would be around 10 per year.
- The majority of the resignations were connected persons who resigned when an SGO was granted, where a mainstream carer took a SGO and those carers who left due to retirement or ill health. Of the remaining carers who left the service the were reasons due to no longer wishing to be foster carers or to transfer to an Independent Fostering Agency. Where reasons for transfer to an IFA are given, they are generally due to an increase in payments.
- In 2020/21 the service will review foster carer payments as they have dropped behind IFA payments and most other local authorities.

### **Maintain placement stability for children in care**

#### **Progress:**

- Placement stability has been a focus for the service during 2019/20 and as a result has had significant high-level governance and oversight. This is not because there has been a sudden increase in placements ending prematurely but rather that a recent decline in the percentage of children in 'stable' placements as defined by MI29 has been identified. In March 2019 65% of placements included in the MI29 cohort were considered 'stable' at March 2020 this has fallen to 60.2%. The cohort linked to this indicator has increased in size significantly over the last two years, from 81 children at March 2018 to 103 children in March 2020. The focus for 2020 will be on care planning for all children and young people coming into care to ensure their long-term placement adoption, SGO or long-term fostering is confirmed within the first 6 months of entering care and they are placed in long-term placements which will support them for years to come. This will ensure that fewer children will enter MI29 initially as 'unstable' after two and a half years in care and fewer will join it later as long-term placements which have ended.

- Placement stability under MI28 remains an area of strength in comparison to other authorities. In Barnsley young people who have had 3 or more placements is only 7.0% as at the end of March 2020. This compares positively with both statistical neighbour and national benchmarks, from latest available data, at 9.5% and 10.0% respectively. This is also an improvement on our position in 2018/19 (11.0%).

### **Continue to support the use of SGOs / CAOs as an alternative to care**

#### **Progress:**

- There is evidence of good use of SGOs and CAOs with financial support where required. CAO and SGO numbers have continued to be above our 2014 baseline figures, they have also exceeded the KPI target set in the last strategy refresh. A total of 34 additional SGO placements were made during 2019/20. Which takes our total number for SGO/CAOs with Allowances at end of March 2020 to 417, 7 above our target.
- Whilst the payment allowances are much less than the costs of keeping a child in public care, they have exceeded the planned budget and ongoing consideration must be given to this area of spend via the Placement Sufficiency Board.
- We have excellent levels of performance regarding numbers of children adopted. During 2019/20 we have placed 32 children in adoptive placements and 34 children have been adopted. The percentage of children leaving care to adoption is 26% for 19/20 which is likely to be well above the national average although this is not yet available for 19/20. In previous years the national average has been just 12%.

### **Increase independent living provision for care leavers**

#### **Progress:**

- Securing staying put agreements for our Care Leavers has been a key priority for our Future Directions team. At March 2020 11 young people were in Staying Put arrangements and this is an increase from 7 at March 2019. The Staying Put Agreement has been updated and measures will be put in place to promote closer working between partners at an earlier stage to secure more Staying Put arrangements in the future. This continues to be a priority for the service and the Placement Sufficiency Board.
- Where staying put arrangements are not possible, we are exploring other options with partners and have developed positive relationships with a small number of trusted providers of semi-independent accommodation.

## 2. PRINCIPLES & AIMS.

Barnsley Council should be able to demonstrate that it has done all that is reasonably practicable to secure sufficiency for children in care. Barnsley, therefore, has a duty to provide a range of high-quality local placements which meet needs.

The underpinning principle of the Barnsley approach is to ensure that the **right** children are admitted to care, at the **right** time in order to secure the **best possible outcomes for children**.

- We share the same aspirations for Children in Care as any other good parent.
- We will listen to and consider the views of children and young people and ensure that their needs are at the centre of our planning and practice.
- Early Help provision, Child in Need services and Child Protection Plans will be the first consideration in meeting assessed needs and will be promoted to facilitate children remaining within their immediate family network where this is safe.
- Early intervention and family support play an important role in de-escalating family problems, keeping children out of care and we will continue to invest in these services accordingly.
- An underpinning principle of family support is to use strengths-based and restorative approaches that seek to build positive, pro-social relationships in order to develop resilience in families.
- Where children cannot be supported within their immediate family, kinship care arrangements will be explored as a preferred alternative arrangement (see Family & Friends Policy).
- Foster care arrangements will be put in place as a first option where family and kinship care arrangements are not possible, and this is assessed as being the best option for the child.
- Residential care will only be put in place where family and kinship care arrangements are not possible, where foster care arrangements are not able to meet needs and only when residential care is assessed as being the most suitable option for the child.
- We believe in Barnsley carers for Barnsley children and wherever possible, children will be placed in, or very near to, Barnsley to facilitate the ongoing support of family / kinship networks and local services. We believe that placing with Barnsley carers makes best use of our community assets and produces better outcomes.
- Meaningful support will be provided to facilitate the rehabilitation to family and extended family networks from being in care when this is in the best interest of the child.
- Services to promote permanency for children and young people within their families or alternative substitute care will be promoted at the earliest opportunity (see Permanency Guidance).
- We will identify and implement the commissioning actions necessary to ensure that BMBC and children's trust partners can satisfy the duty to

provide sufficient accommodation and support to meet the needs of children in the care.

- We will identify the actions necessary to fulfil this ambition in the context of mounting pressures on the resources available across the Children and Young People's Trust (CYPT) and to ensure that resources are allocated in a way that achieves optimum value for money.

### 3. COSTS & COMPARISONS.

#### Current Children in Care costs vs existing strategy / plan

The scope of the placement & sufficiency strategy covers the following:

- external residential & foster care placements;
- in-house foster carers;
- placements within BMBC owned children's home; and
- other placements such as SGOs, CAOs and adoptions.
- Accommodation for Care Leavers

The following table compares actual cost / performance against the revised plan for 2019/20.

	<b>Revised Plan</b>	<b>Outturn</b>
	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2019/20</b>
<b>CIC Population as at 31 March</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>303</b>
<b>Actual Costs:</b>	<b>£M</b>	<b>£M</b>
Fostering	5.742	6.234
Residential	4.006	5.265
Others – SGO, CAO, Adoptions	4.195	4.582
Health, DSG and Education Contributions	-0.350	-1.166
Other income / grant funding	-0.027	-0.403
<b>Total Care Costs</b>	<b>13.568</b>	<b>14.512</b>
<b>Total Care Budget</b>	<b>13.568</b>	<b>13.568</b>
<b>Variance</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.944</b>

- Actual net spend on CIC placements is £14.512m for 2019/20, against which a financial pressure (i.e. overspend) of £944k has been reported for the year.
- Barnsley's overall CIC population at the end of the year was 303, but peaked at 316 in December. It should be noted that Barnsley's CIC numbers (59.7 per

10k population aged <18) still compares favorably to its statistical neighbour's (102.5) and national average (65).

- This financial pressure is attributable to three main factors; Firstly, an increase in the number of children placed with Independent Fostering Agencies, 15 placements above what was projected in the strategy refresh completed in April 2019 equating to a pressure of £0.4m.
- Secondly, although the number in residential placements (including secure welfare) was 15 at year end, it peaked at 20 in June 2019. Increased funding contributions from health towards placement costs and other grant funding helped mitigate costs in 2019/20. This area resulted in an overall overspend of £0.3m.
- Thirdly, increasing use of alternatives to public care and less expensive care options such as SGOs and CAOs have also contributed to the forecast financial pressure for CIC by £0.2m

### Unit cost & value for money

The following table compares Barnsley's children looked after unit cost per child per week against the LA group average.

<b>Unit costs £ per child per week (Gross costs)</b> (source: CIPFA children looked after benchmarking data)				
	2018 costs		2019 costs	
	Barnsley	LA Average	Barnsley	LA Average
LA own children's homes	£2,257	£3,991	£2,301	£3,373
External residential	£3,526	£3,940	£3,854	£4,201
LA foster care	£452	£447	£464	£476
External foster care	£829	£916	£861	£937
PAF B8 – overall unit cost	£786	£974	£796	£1,022

- Whilst the average gross cost of CIC per week has risen marginally during 2019/20 by 1.3% to £796, this compares favourably to the LA average which has increased by 5% to £1,022 during the same period. This suggests our commissioning arrangements have mitigated some of the impact of the competitive children's placement market.
- Barnsley's unit cost per child per week is consistently lower than the local authority average across the key type of placements.
- In previous years the unit cost of the council's in-house foster care has been slightly higher than the LA average and this was due to comparatively higher

allowance payments. However, current unit costs are now below the LA average, and reflect the impact of the revised foster care allowance scheme implemented in 2018.

- When expressed as spend per head of population (aged 0 – 17) basis, Barnsley’s CIC unit cost / spend (£209) is comparably lower than the LA group average (£257). However, this margin is closing, down from 18% in 2018 to 9% in 2019. This is due to the narrowing gap between our LA children’s homes cost and that of the LA average.
- The following table outline the composition of placements, in percentage terms, of those in either fostering or residential care. This data excludes children and young people who have been placed for adoption or placed with parents / family carers and for whom therefore a foster placement is unnecessary:

<b>Composition of placements (%) – children looked after</b> (CIPFA children looked after benchmarking)				
	2018		2019	
	Barnsley	LA Average	Barnsley	LA Average
LA own children’s homes	2%	2%	2%	2%
External residential	6%	9%	6%	10%
LA foster care	65%	61%	68%	58%
External foster care	27%	28%	24%	30%

- Barnsley’s data on placements compares favourably with the LA group averages, particularly in external foster care where the proportion of placements has fallen from 27% to 24% (and is below the LA group average of 30%).
- Conversely, Barnsley’s performance in relation to in-house foster care showed improvement in 2019 (an increase from 65% to 68%). Given Barnsley’s strong performance in terms of adoption and alternative permanence arrangements this represents a positive trend since the last iteration of the strategy.

### **Assessing future demand**

This strategy assumes that the care population in Barnsley will remain stable at around the 300 figure for the next two years.

As numbers in the care system have increases nationally, the best and most plausible means of mitigating costs is to ensure we can respond effectively to local demand by improving how we manage placements to achieve a significant increase in local foster carer capacity and the judicious use of local, independent foster care arrangements.

We shall use our comparatively better investment in our in-house carers to produce the placements needed in the right categories.

### Projected CIC cost 2021 - 2023

The following table shows projected placements numbers as well as the financial costs for the period 2020/21 to 2022/23:

	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Forecast at 31 <sup>st</sup> May 2020	2021/22 Plan	2022/23 Plan
Fostering – in-house	151	150	160	170
Fostering – External agencies	75	81	71	61
Residential - external children homes	14	17	14	14
Residential – Family Assessment	-	0	1	1
Residential - Secure Welfare	1	1	1	1
Residential – Semi-independent	5	6	7	7
Residential - BMBC owned home	5	5	5	5
Other placements*	52	41	41	41
Assumed CIC Population	<b>303</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>300</b>
SGO's; CAO; Stay-put	428	438	455	472

\* includes Shared Lives, adoptions; kinship placements; etc.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
	Outturn	Forecast as at 31 <sup>st</sup> May 20	Plan	Plan
Projected Costs:	£M	£M	£M	£M
Fostering	6.215	6.466	6.558	6.468
Residential	5.265	4.592	4.309	4.309
Others – SGO, CAO, Stay-put, Adoption	4.582	4.795	5.002	5.258
Health & DSG Contributions	-1.166	-0.631	-0.350	-0.350
Other Income / funding	-0.384	-0.233	-0.220	-0.220
<b>Total Care Costs</b>	<b>14.512</b>	<b>14.989</b>	<b>15.299</b>	<b>15.465</b>
<b>Total Care Budget</b>	<b>13.568</b>	<b>13.778</b>	<b>13.778</b>	<b>13.778</b>
<b>Variance</b>	<b>0.944</b>	<b>1.211</b>	<b>1.521</b>	<b>1.687</b>
<b>Additional Funding Requirement</b>		<b>1.211</b>	<b>0.310</b>	<b>0.166</b>

The following are the key assumptions underpinning 2020/21 to 2022/23 spend projections:

1. The forecast placement costs in 2020/21 have been updated to reflect the full year impact of placements from 2019/20 (and cost pressures) as well as expected demographic / inflationary growth for the year.
2. The 2020/21 forecast is based on latest cost projections (as at 31<sup>st</sup> May) as well as an estimated increase of 2 additional potential UASC semi-independent placements.
3. Latest indication, as shown in the forecast above, is that this would result in additional cost pressure of £1.211m in 2020/21. This in-year cost pressure will be monitored and addressed through the Council's budgetary reporting procedures.
4. The above plan / modelling assume CIC numbers will be managed over the medium term around the 300 mark. It is envisaged that the effective implementation of the proposed actions (included on page 18 and 19) would ensure that CIC numbers are managed down to the assumed range.
5. The projections assumed that the number of fostering and residential care placements will remain consistent around 259 over the medium term – this equates to 86% of total CIC population.
6. The revised strategy from 21/22 reflects an increase in residential care numbers to 16 (from 15) including a secure welfare / accommodation placement per annum at a unit cost of £5,000 per week.
7. In addition to above, the strategy includes increases to other placements such as SGOs, Adoption Allowances, etc.
8. Current weekly unit cost of residential and foster care placements has been used in calculating future years cost projections, and with a 2.5% uplift applied to foster care allowances.
9. Funding contributions (e.g. health funding) and income related to CIC placements has been adjusted accordingly based on latest information.

Based on the above assumptions, the CIC cost model shows an additional funding requirement of £1.211m in 2020/21, £0.310m for 2021/22 and £0.166M for 2022/23 respectively.

Expenditure on children in care and those who have achieved permanence outside of the care system needs to be considered in total. Barnsley has kept the number of children in the care system at relatively low levels for a number of years. This is partly as a result of having achieved permanence by utilising the strengths of wider family networks through SGOs and CAOs and through adoption. This however also comes at a cost with long term CGO and SGO allowance commitments aligned to fostering payments.



#### 4. COVID-19 IMPACT.

At the time of writing the UK has been in lockdown conditions for 3 months. During the lockdown period there have been widescale school closures and a reduction in the number of partner agencies delivering direct work with children and young people. The impact of Covid-19 is likely to be greater on groups with initial low resilience – no recourse to public funds, children who live in poverty, asylum seeking young people, children in care, young carers, and children with disabilities.

To date the impact on Children in Care numbers has been minimal, however, there has been a significant reduction in referrals into Children's Social Care, in 2019, 771 referrals were made between March and May. During the same period in 2020, 584 referrals were made to Children's Social Care. This is replicated nationally, and we anticipate a reverse of this trend as lockdown conditions are eased. Increased family tensions, including parental conflict, domestic abuse, sexual abuse in the family home, child on parent violence and physical abuse is likely to see a short-term increase in the care population in Barnsley following the relaxations of the lockdown arrangements by the Government.

Whilst our approach to care planning will always focus on supporting families to ensure children are able to stay at home or, where appropriate, return home, it is important to recognise the potential impact on our Children in Care numbers therefore we have profiled two outcomes; an increase in CIC numbers by 3% and an increase by 5%, see the tables below:

<b>3% increase in Children in Care (+10)</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>
<b>Projected Costs:</b>	<b>£M</b>	<b>£M</b>
Funding Requirement (As shown above)	1.211	0.310
Additional Funding Requirement due to Covid-19	0.261	0.091
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.472</b>	<b>0.401</b>

<b>5% increase in Children in Care (+15)</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>
<b>Projected Costs:</b>	<b>£M</b>	<b>£M</b>
Funding Requirement (As shown above)	1.211	0.310
Additional Funding Requirement due to Covid-19	0.382	0.137
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.593</b>	<b>0.447</b>

The tables above show that an additional 10 children in care the projected cost will be £0.261m in 2020/21 and £0.091m in 2021/22. With an additional 15 children the projected costs would be £0.382m in 2020/21 and £0.137m in 2021/22.

This assumes an anticipated increase within the range of 300 to 315, in children in care in the short term following the relaxations of the lockdown arrangements by the Government. It is envisaged that any increase in CIC numbers in 2020/21 would be managed down in the following year, with CIC numbers stabilising at around the 300 by the end on 2021/22.

## **5. OUTCOMES.**

Meeting the needs of children in care in the current climate will present some very significant challenges to the Council. In response to this, there is a clear need to improve performance in the following ways:

- Develop the local market to ensure the availability of family placements, including for children and young people with complex needs;
- Reverse the recent trend for the increased reliance on external fostering provision;
- Continue to increase the number and choice of internal foster placements across all age groups;
- Implement the Mockingbird project to create a new model of in-house fostering provision. Mockingbird builds on learning from previous successes delivered in partnerships with the Area Councils;
- Increase the in-house residential capacity to mitigate impact of the challenging external residential market;
- Maintain placement stability and continue to support the use of SGOs / CAOs as an alternative to care;
- Increase independent living provision for care leavers through new approaches and partnerships.

## **6. KEY ACTIONS ARISING FROM STRATEGY.**

1. Prevent entry into care where appropriate by continuing to develop family support and early intervention and prevention services.
2. Ensure wherever possible Barnsley children are placed with a Barnsley family;
  - a. Increase the numbers of children placed with BMBC foster carers;
  - b. We will continue to develop the local IFA market through engaging with providers to encourage Barnsley based families to care for Barnsley children;
  - c. We will establish a regular IFA provider forum to identify future placements and work together to identify and respond to future needs.
3. Improve the recruitment and retention of BMBC foster carers to ensure more Barnsley children can be placed and remain with Barnsley carers;
  - a. Promote support and develop the BMBC Fostering Approval process so carers can care for all age groups and on both short- and long-term basis;
  - b. Review the payment scheme for in-house Foster Carers in light of our payment level falling below the LA average (CIPFA Benchmark).
4. Implement Mockingbird project; Foster carer hub model;
  - a. Implementation of 2 satellite cohorts to support the respite and emergency provision for up to 24 young people of up to 12 looked after children;
  - b. This is dependent on COVID-19 restrictions allowing this project to develop.

5. Produce business case to consider development of further in-house residential provision;
  - a. Initial scoping has indicated increased in-house provision could deliver long term savings;
  - b. A full Business Case will be presented during the current financial.
  
6. Increase the range of 16+ independent living provision to support transition to adulthood for those in long term care;
  - a. Explore how a Shared Lives service could increase the range of post-16/Children in Care supportive placements for Children in Care and Care Leavers;
  - b. Review mechanisms, quality assurance and future demand for 16+ provision;
  - c. Develop and procure a 16+/semi-independent framework of local providers.
  
7. Continue to support development and implementation of the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA);
  - a. OneAdoptionSouth to officially commence 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021;
  - b. The RAA will promote closer co-operation between the 4 local authority Adoption Agencies in South Yorkshire and the 2 other existing Regional Adoption Agencies in the Yorkshire and Humber area;
  - c. The RAA will lead the recruitment of adopters and support in the placement of children for adoption;
  - d. Impact of RAA on placement sufficiency anticipated 2022/23.
  
8. Work effectively with Partners across Children and Young People's Trust to meet a wide variety of additional needs including mental health and support to Carers;
  - a. Continue to request joint funding for packages through the appropriate channels; CRAG;
  - b. Maintain close working relationship with CAMHS to ensure CIC pathway is effective and supporting our CIC population.
  
9. Continue to support and develop regional approaches through active membership of the White Rose Commissioning Consortium and alternative mechanisms;
  - a. Build on the proposed provider engagement programme to develop positive working relationships with Private Providers.
  - a. Utilise Private Provider forum to generate Best Practice discussions and opportunities for increased understanding around Quality Assurance.

Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2020-23  
Sufficiency Outcomes Framework (with targets)

The table below quantifies targets to enable us to deliver our aspiration to further shift the balance away from those placed in external residential or independent fostering placements and into placements with in-house fostering families.

**NB The cohort is all children in care who require a care placement, excluding children placed with adoptive parents but where an adoption order is still awaited.**

Outcome	Impact Measurement	Actual 19/20 Baseline	Target 20/21	Target 21/22	Target 22/23
<b>1. Improve permanency planning / make good use of alternatives to care</b>	Children placed for adoption	31	40	40	40
	Children placed with alternative orders (cost-bearing) - SGOs / CAOs	417	432	447	462
	Care leavers in 'staying put' and "staying close" and 'shared lives' arrangements	10	23	25	25
<b>2. Reduce reliance on Independent Fostering Agencies</b>	Number of children placed in IFAs	75	71	71	61
	Number of children placed in internal fostering	161	160	160	170
<b>3. Increase availability of suitable BMBC foster placements</b>	Net increase in numbers of foster carer households (newly recruited less numbers leaving in period)	4	15	20	20
	Net increase in numbers of available internal foster care placements	2	15	20	20
<b>4. Maintain low numbers of young people in residential care settings</b>	Number of young people in independent residential	14	14	15	15
	Number of young people in BMBC residential	5	5	5	5
	Number of young people in secure	1	1	1	1

Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2020-23  
Sufficiency Outcomes Framework (with targets)

	welfare placements				
	Number of young people in semi-supported accommodation	8	5	5	5