

Children and Young People's Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy 2020–2025

Looked after Children
Up to the age of 18

Produced by:

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Document Governance

Title	Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy
Purpose/scope	Children in Care up to the age of 18
Subject key words	Placement Sufficiency Looked After Children Corporate Parenting Permanence Residential placements Fostering Placements Disabled Children Supported Lodgings
Council Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put our children and young people first. • Protect and support our vulnerable children and young adults.
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Date Established	February 2021
Date of Next Review	February 2021
Service Improvement & Efficiency Validation	Via Children's Services Senior Leadership Team
Senior Leadership Team Sign Off	
Legal Sign Off	N/A
Finance Sign Off	N/A
Approver	Sonya Miller Assistant Director: Children's Services

Contents Page

- 1. THE PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT**
- 2. OUTCOMES AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**
- 3. COMMISSIONING ARRANGEMENTS**
- 4. CHILDREN IN CARE AND PREVENTION**
- 5. CHILDREN LEAVING CARE**
- 6. COMMISSIONING/IDENTIFIED SUFFICIENCY NEEDS**
- 7. OUR GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS**

1. The purpose of the document

- 1.1 This strategy sets out how Shropshire Council will ensure that children and young people can be supported to meet their social, health and educational needs and to secure the best possible outcomes for children in care and care leavers, and to support them to achieve independence.
- 1.2 We will outline how we intend to meet our obligations under the Sufficiency Duty which requires each Local Authority "...to take steps that secure, so far as is reasonably practicable..." sufficient accommodation within its area to meet the needs of children that they are looking after. Whilst the sufficiency duty applies in respect of all looked after children, it recognizes the importance of earlier, preventative action to support children and families so that few children become looked after – those who are on the edge of care.
- 1.3 Our aim, through market development and working with partners is to achieve the right placement at the right time for our children in care.
- 1.4 We have high aspirations for children and young people and their families within Shropshire and we want to enable them to access information, advice, guidance and support proactively to ensure they can continue to live well.

Therefore, we are committed to achieving permanency and stability for all children and young people through our provisions and those of our partners.

- 1.5 This strategy is to be read in conjunction with the following documents:
 - Shropshire Children's Trust Children and Families Plan
 - Shropshire Corporate Parenting Strategy
 - Shropshire Permanence for Children Plan
 - Shropshire children's market position statement and the annual action plan.
 - Shropshire External Placement Quality Assurance Policy

2. Outcomes and Performance Indicators

We will measure our progress towards achieving our strategic commissioning and sufficiency aims and therefore we will review annually against the following:

2.1 Key outcomes:

Children and young people who are being looked after are living well in a secure, permanent and stable placement, whilst receiving any other appropriate support to enable them to be supported well through their childhood through to adulthood.

2.2 Key Performance Indicators

Key performance indicators	17/18	18/19	19/20
Numbers of Looked After Children	338	396	399
Rate of Looked after children per 10,000 residents under 18	57	66	67
Statistical neighbours average – rate of looked after children per 10,000 residents under 18	57	59	Not available
National Average - rate of looked after children per 10,000 residents under 18	64	65	Not available
	17/18	18/19	19/20
% of children with 3 or more placements during the year (low percentage = good performance)	8	6	5

Statistical neighbours - % of children with 3 or more placements during the year	11	11	Not available
National - % of children with 3 or more placements during the year	11	10	Not available
% of looked after children in the same placement for at least 2 years (High percentage = good performance)	72	70	76
Statistical neighbours - % of looked after children in the same placement for at least 2 years (High percentage = good performance)	71	67	Not available
National - % of looked after children in the same placement for at least 2 years (High percentage = good performance)	70	69	Not available

3. Commissioning arrangements

3.1 We are committed to providing the right provision for children and young people and their families to achieve the outcomes that matter to them in life.

We want to see them living healthy, happy, more independent and fulfilling lives.

3.2 Therefore, within our strategy we will ensure that the Council's priorities, values and legislative requirements underpin all future service developments and meet the sufficiency needs required as part out our Corporate Parenting Strategy.

To ensure that there is sufficient provision to cater for the needs of our children in care,

We will:

- use our Market Position Statement (see Annex 1) to inform and work with the private independent sector, charitable and voluntary sector partners to identify gaps.
- shape the marketplace to create sufficiency of accommodation placements for fostering, residential, supported accommodation and move on accommodation with support
- identify gaps in the marketplace to meet the needs of children and young people and their families to confirm our commissioning needs (see Annex 2).
- share required intelligence with other local and regional commissioners of care, education and health services to achieve a joint collaborative commissioning approach.
- we will continue to collaboratively commission with our West Midlands colleagues through the regional Association of Director of Children Services Group (ADCS)
- continue to inform and develop arrangements with our commissioning colleagues within the Shropshire CCG's to ensure that children and young people's physical and mental health needs are continually met

3.3 How we will commission:

- Our commissioning begins with a comprehensive assessment of a child/young person's individual needs and wishes which creates the basis to set out what is needed to achieve the child/young person's outcomes.

We then use this information to inform:

- providers (both internal and external) of our sufficiency requirements
- collaboration with health and education commissioners locally, regionally and nationally to learn from other ways that have achieved good outcomes for children and young people
- Commissioning and operational teams will jointly review the data against our strategic plans to ensure that our strategic direction is meeting the needs of children and young people.

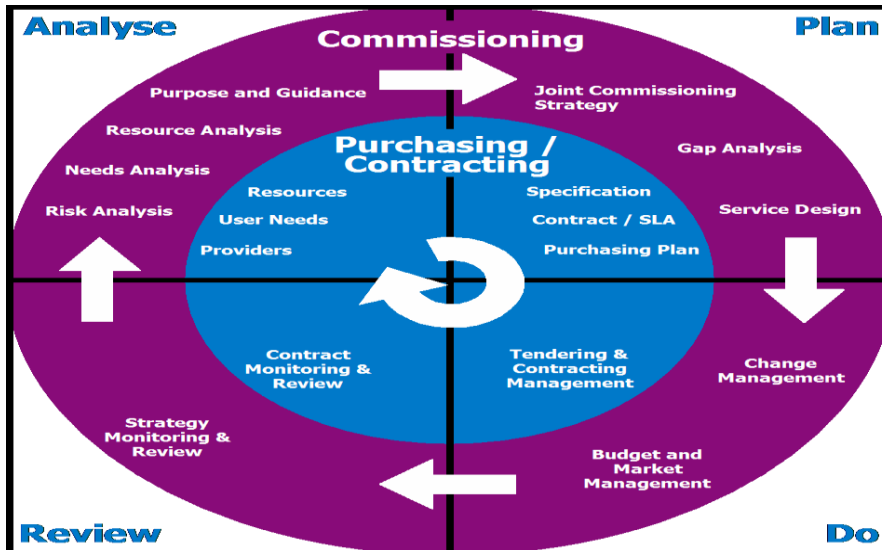
Our procurement and contracts colleagues will support us to secure the services we need through a range of options that will enable us to have flexible contracts that are either:

- specific for Shropshire or
- collaboratively developed on a West Midlands sub-regional/regional basis

either approach will have a focus on achieving best value for money and efficient use of resources when tendering and contracting.

- Our cps duty team is our day to day direct contact with our market providers for placements services that are required for our children and young people. This team enables a single point of access for discussion and queries from providers.
- The team currently utilises the West Midlands Portal that enables West Midlands Local Authorities and Providers a safe space to share information about what placements and services are required.
- Providers registered on the portal can see how many referrals on any day have been submitted by each Local Authority for their type of services.

3.4 Strategic Commissioning Governance/overview will use the commissioning cycle outlined below:

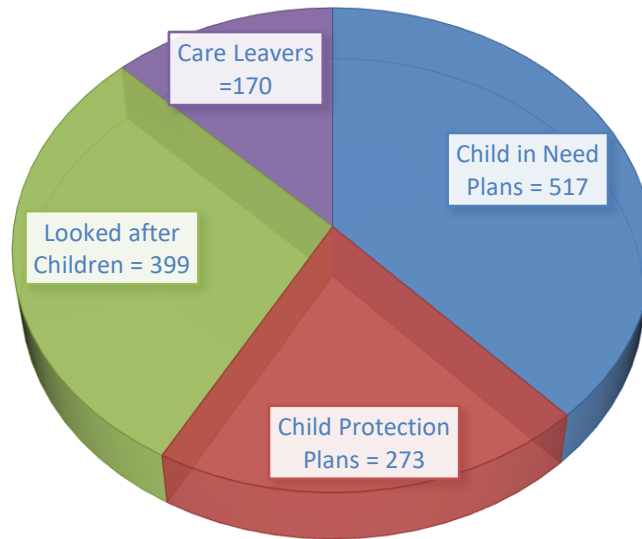


We will:

- Review this strategy between our senior leadership team and commissioning team annually to evaluate progress being made and to update it.
- Monitor and review our delivery/provision and achievement of children's outcomes against our performance targets
- Review our data and projected demands
- Update our commissioning intentions
- Review the financial implications
- Update our Corporate Parenting Group via periodic reports from the Children's Senior Leadership Team on the progress made under this Strategy.

The children and young people we were working with as at 31st March 2020:

NUMBERS OF CHILDREN WE ARE WORKING WITH AS AT 31-3-20



4. Looked after Children and Prevention

Prevention - Edge of Care

- 4.1 Wherever possible and right to do so following a comprehensive assessment, we are seeking to ensure that families can care for their own children and young people by seeking the right help at the right time keeping families together for as long as it is safe to do so.

It is all of our responsibility within our communities to ensure that:

- Families are supported to look after their children and young people
- Children, young people and the adults that care for them have good emotional health and wellbeing
- Children and young people grow up well
- Where it is safe to do so that children and young people remain with their family

Our Early Help strategy includes support from social workers to help manage risk at levels outside of social work intervention.

More support is being provided to the children on the edge of care. With targeted resource where a need is identified. This support includes residential short breaks, outreach and family group conferencing.

We will work with all partners to work together to ensure that practitioners within each agency will support families where it is needed.

Looked after Children

- 4.2 Where following a comprehensive assessment, children and young people are unable to remain with their families we are seeking to achieve the following outcome:

Children and young people who are being looked after are living well in a secure, permanent and stable placement, whilst receiving any other appropriate support to enable them to be supported well through their childhood through to adulthood. (Children in Care).

4.3 Our Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out our vision and commitment and explains how we, as the Council, will be an effective and trustworthy corporate parent for any child and young person who is in our care irrespective of their age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, faith or disability.

We will:

- Know our children, their needs, talents and aspirations and promote their interests
- Hold high aspirations for their future and expect the best for and from them
- Take an interest in their successes and problems and show our pride in their achievements, and celebrate them
- Listen to their views and ensure they influence practice, service developments and policy
- Ensure they are consulted about their own lives and plans
- Recognise, support and respect their identity in all aspects
- Ensure our children attend their education regularly
- Promote and support high academic achievement by working with our schools and carers to ensure that the needs of our children are understood and met
- Support their health and emotional well-being and resilience
- Support transition to adult life and promote their economic prospects and prepare them to become responsible citizens

And most importantly...as Corporate Parents we will preface all our thinking, planning, actions and decisions with:

“would this be good enough for my child.....”

4.4 Wherever possible and safe to do so our intention should always be to support the birth parents to provide care that meets the permanence needs of their child. In Shropshire our permanency strategy sets out our aim is to achieve permanency for children outside of Local Authority care where this is possible and in the interests of the child. Planning for permanence aims to ensure that children have a secure, stable and loving family to support them through childhood and beyond.

Shropshire Council makes permanence planning systemic practice throughout our care planning. Our permanency options include:

- Remaining with or returning to the care of their birth family
- Permanent placement with family or friends carers
- Adoption
- Early permanence placements/fostering for adoption
- Special Guardianship (SGO)
- Child Arrangements Orders
- Long Term Foster Care
- Residential Care

	Placements	31-3-20
	A5 - Placed for adoption with placement order (under section 21 of the 2002 Act) with current foster carer	1
	A6 - Placed for adoption with placement order (under section 21 of the 2002 Act) not with current foster carer	6
	H5 - Semi-independent living accommodation not subject to Children's Homes regulations	14
	K2 - Homes and Hostels	64
	P1 - Placed with own parents	32
	P2 - Independent living	10
	U1 - Foster placement with relative or friend- long term fostering	75
	U3 - Foster placement with relative or friend- not long term or FFA	43
	U4 - Placement with other foster carer- long term fostering	47
	U5 - Placement with other foster carer who is also an approved adopter- FFA	1
	U6 - Placement with other foster carer - not long term or FFA	106
	Grand Total	399

4.5 Placement Stability

Children and young people need to be in the right placement for them to feel safe to enable them to develop and thrive.

We know that moving placement whether through an emergency or planned move has an emotional impact on the children and young people, carers and social workers. To support placement stability, we have:

- A forum where social workers can discuss the child/young person's placement needs using our PATHS (Providing Access to Help and Support) meetings. This panel can support a restorative discussion around whether the placement is still meeting the child/young person's needs and either help to decide if an alternative placement is needed (and what this placement type is) or how the current placement can be supported
- A Permanence Forum that considers the permanence options for all looked after children under 16 before their second Looked After Child Review, or where there is a significant change in care plan proposed and reviews the plans for children exiting care if there is drift or delay
- A Permanence Tracker that tracks all care plans to ensure children are in the placement that reflects their plan and that exit or 'move on' plans are enacted in the right time for the child
- Access to therapeutic practitioners to support our social care teams
- A Staying Put policy that outlines our pledge to young people who would like to stay in their foster home to continue their independent skills, education and/or training
- Access to various additional specialist support options and specialist assessments that, with our partners can ensure appropriate access to the right service that can meet the child/young person needs whilst they are in care, stepping down from care or to prevent risk of family breakdown
- Allocated Inclusion Mentors from the Virtual School Team. The Inclusion Mentor works with the school to ensure the child has a termly Personal Education Plan meeting with SMART targets to support increased rates of progress
- Access to an Independent Advocacy and Independent Visitor Service who work with our children and young people individually
- Access to commissioned support for children with Sexually Harmful Behaviour.
- Staff from Shropshire Youth Justice team to work with us and children in care to reduce the risk of offending. The Youth Justice Team provide advice and guidance on how to work safely with young people and staff
- Access to support from the CSE/Missing Lead to provide advice and guidance for staff in relation to the Exploitation Pathway.

4.6 Complex/High risk needs of children and young people:

We have an increasing small number of children and young people where they present with a number of needs and risks that will take time and specialist interventions to stabilize their needs.

We recognise that when there is a sudden escalation of risks/needs that specialist placements are required to stabilise these needs and manage the high risks.

These specialist placements need to be able to accept emergency placements (following placement breakdown or urgent new in care placement) and be able to work with us in jointly assessing the needs and understanding why a child/young person is presenting with complex/high risk needs in order that the right systemic interventions can be put in place.

We liaise directly with the Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group's Continuing Care Team and in particular the Designated Clinical Officer (DCO), the Health of looked after children Nurse to ensure that children and young people are accessing health services that can meet their needs.

4.7 Children with Disabilities Team:

Our children with disabilities team provide a specialist service/intervention for children with a disability or complex needs. They undertake assessments and provide support to families to agree a support plan that will help the child/family.

Where the child/young person's needs are more complex, the team will undertake joint assessments with Health, education and adult services to achieve joint care and support plans.

Transition planning for our children with disabilities commences at 14 years of age to enable the right support to be identified and plan accordingly.

Through our close working with families, children with disabilities and parent carer forums we understand that a range of options are needed from good information, advice and guidance to easy access to local community support services to overnight short breaks.

We are working jointly with education and health commissioners on mapping what local services we have, ensuring our SEND local offer is up to date.

As at the 31st March 2020, the Disabled Children's Team Social Workers were supporting 28 Looked After children (7% of the overall LAC).

Disabled Children	As at 31-3-20	
	Numbers	% of Overall DCT
DCT children overall	234	n/a
DCT children who are LAC	24	10.39%
DCT children in External Residential Placement/Providers	15	6.49%
DCT children in Internal Residential placement	1	0.43%
DCT children in Internal Fostering placements	5	2.16%
DCT children in External Fostering Placements/Providers	1	0.43%
DCT children placed at home	2	0.86%

4.8 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

In accordance legislation and with Shropshire Council's vision for children, our approach is that Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children are entitled to the same quality of services as children normally resident within the boundaries of the county.

They are seen as children first and foremost, vulnerable and in need of care, protection and encouragement.

In Shropshire the number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children has historically been and is low.

As at 31st March 2020, there were 8 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) who were assessed and provided with accommodation and Looked After Child services under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989.

Placement Types	Numbers
Residential	1
Independent Living (SL)	1
Semi-independent	2
Fostering	4

A range of provision is and will continue to be utilised to provide appropriate accommodation options including foster care and Supported Lodgings (a semi independence post 16 family-based accommodation provision which is funded and managed by Shropshire Council).

Stepping Stones

From April 2021 Shropshire Children Services will be implementing the Stepping Stones project.

The project is based on the North Yorkshire 'No Wrong Door Project' which successfully improved the safety and stability of children and young people by a right people, right place, right time approach.

The purpose of the project is to:

- Reduce the number of children requiring high cost residential placements
- Increase the number of children being able to safely remain or return to live with their family or a foster family
- Provide a holistic, psychologically informed approach which provides wrap around, individual support to children, young people and adults in families
- Reframe the view of residential care to a short-term intervention rather than long term solution

The project aims to support children and families through multi-disciplinary working and outreach support, to achieve at least 15 total placements being avoided (children not needing to become looked after) and 15 step down from residential to internal foster care by 2024 (3 year plan).

5. Care Leavers

5.1 When our young people are ready to leave care, we strive to ensure that Care Leavers receive the right move on placement for them and continue to receive the right services at the right time to promote independence.

5.2 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 increased the upper age limit of Care Leavers from 21 to 24 years and the local offer for Care Leavers has been developed to respond to this change.

This will be reviewed continuously with our Care Leavers to ensure that it is still meeting their needs.

Care Leavers will be supported to recognise when and where to seek help and support at the earliest opportunity to enable them to live well.

Care leavers will receive the right move on placement for them and continue to receive the right services at the right time to live well in adulthood.

5.3 Accommodation for Care Leavers 16 to 24 to enable care leavers to live well independently are sourced via the Leaving Care Team.

Accommodation options to enable care leavers to live well independently including:

- Supported Lodgings Providers
- Priority for housing provision in liaison with the Housing team.

5.4 Support for Care Leavers

Care Leavers are allocated a Personal Advisor from the team to provide support and promote our young people to achieve independent life skills.

The Local Authority actively promotes the Shropshire Local Offer for Care Leavers and is developing the Care Leavers' Covenant offer with local and national bodies.

6. Identified Priorities and Sufficiency needs

6.1 To ensure that Shropshire is resource 'sufficient' during the next five years we will continue our work to the support and maintain diversity of services to meet the needs of children:

- to achieve permanency by strengthening families through the provision of preventive and early help services
- by delivering good quality and timely care planning for those who need to be looked after children;

We will:

- Continue to further develop the work of our in-house provision including plans regarding the development of outreach arrangements (Stepping Stones).
- Increase the voice of the child to better understand the quality and the child's experience of our fostering and residential provision in Shropshire
- Support the step- down from residential to foster care where family-based care experience is in the child's best interest
- Continue to support the seeking of permanency arrangements/plans where identified in the child's best interest and provide support and training to those parents and carers to enable them to meet the needs of children in their care without the need for the child to remain looked after
- Continue to commission and review placements to ensure children are matched to placements best able to meet their needs and at best value to the LA. We will do this through recommissioning our block contract for residential providers locally and we will explore and join sub and regional frameworks for commissioning a range of other placement provisions
- Avoid/manage the use of unregulated provision for looked after children – not for under 16s and for 16/17 year olds only where this meets their assessed needs to support them towards living independently.
- Place children within their Local Authority where this is reasonably practicable and where it is consistent with a child's needs and welfare;

We will target our fostering recruitment according to need and develop our training offer to ensure high quality and well supported carers and continue to recruit foster carers who can provide permanency and placements for adolescents and sibling groups.

Provide a comprehensive, inclusive and transparent service to those interested in adoption to enable trust of the adoption service to develop; respond quickly to enquiries and provide prospective adopters access to all necessary information to assist them in their decision-making process.

Find families for Shropshire children awaiting permanence through adoption AND be ambitious and positively consider a broader range of children and recruit equally ambitious prospective adopters. This will be strengthened through the progression of the Regional Adoption Agency.

Provide a post adoption service that is flexible to the needs of adoptive families experiencing challenges or difficulties by providing a range of therapeutic support either directly or through commissioning including accessing the Adoption Support Fund.

- 6.2 Predicting Children in Care numbers is challenging, however there are various datasets we monitor to help understand the picture in Shropshire and are detailed in our Market Position Statement in Appendix 1. This statement details our forecast of numbers of children and young people who will need the varying type of services/placements to help and support them to live well. Updates regarding this data are provided in Appendix 2.
- 6.3 We have identified the following priority placement types that are needed in order to meet our general sufficiency needs with further details in our commissioning needs document in Appendix 3.

- Foster placements including specialist for disabled children and respite/shared care
- Residential children's homes placements
- Move on/Step down accommodation with independence support

Placements for children's needs:

For children in care we need regulated placements to meet the following types of children and young people's needs:

- Missing from Care
- Sexualised behaviour (male/female victim/perpetuator)
- Violent/aggressive behaviour
- Self-Harming
- Learning disability/Autism
- Managing multi-faceted behaviours (eg substance misuse, criminality) that stem from underlying needs
- Social, emotional and mental health behaviours
- At risk of CCE (male)
- At risk of CSE (female)

Staff Expertise needed:

Foster carers/residential staff: Staff are resilient, well trained and supported well to manage children and young peoples multi-faceted behaviours stemming from for example: emotional trauma, neglect, poor parenting and no clear consistent boundaries.

For more specialist services in managing high complex/high risks we need staff to be trained to support children and young people with the following needs/behaviours:

- Self harm
- Substance misuse
- Absconding
- Challenging behaviours and/or offending behaviour
- Mental Health
- Exploitation – eg) at risk of sexual/criminal exploitation

In preparation for leaving care, we need Supported Lodging providers within Shropshire for young people aged 16 to 24 years who are ready to move on/step down from their care placement.

The types of accommodation with or without support that is needed is:

- Supported Lodgings
- Supported accommodation for children aged 16-18 years

7. Our Governance arrangements

- 7.1 We have created this strategy and market position statement to be used to outline our priorities. These are documents that are intended to evolve and will, following annual reviews, develop throughout the 5 years to ensure that what we set out to achieve is under regular review and scrutiny.
- 7.2 We are committed to ensuring that we are progressing our priorities in a timely way and documenting our progress. Every year we will review the work we have undertaken and review the progress made against the outcomes and performance indicators as outlined. We will also take into account statutory datasets and by setting out this timescale in advance will enable readers/stakeholders to provide comment/feedback to us that can be incorporated at this annual review.
- 7.3 We will undertake quarterly reviews of the data and trends in the Market Position Statement and report on those trends and amend our action plans and market needs accordingly.
- 7.4 The first review will take place in December 2021. This first review will ensure we have robust reporting mechanisms in place to report progress.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Shropshire Market Position Statement – data @ 31-3-20



App 1 Shropshire
Market Position Stat

Appendix 2 – Market Position Statement data update end of Q3 – 31-12-20



App 2 Placement
Sufficiency Review C

Appendix 3 – Market Needs



Appendix 3 Market
needs.docx

