

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

**CHILDREN IN CARE –
PROGRESS UPDATE PLACEMENT SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY 2013-2015**

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on the progress in implementing the Placement Sufficiency Strategy for Children in Care and Care Leavers 2013-2015.

2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Council is required by The Children Act 1989 to take reasonable steps to secure sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of Children In Care, specifically the provision of foster care and children's homes to meet this need.
- 2.2 On 31st March 2014 170 children were in care in North Lincolnshire and 68 were receiving support as care leavers. This is 47.9 children per 10,000 of the 0 to 18 population which is less than the England average of 60 and statistical neighbour of 68. North Lincolnshire has approximately 40 Children less than the England Average in care.
- 2.3 Since formulating the strategy there is now a duty under the Children and Families Act 2014 to support children in foster care to "Stay Put" and remain in their foster families beyond their 18th birthday where this is possible. The more recent Adoption Reforms also encourages the recruitment of foster carers who can adopt. North Lincolnshire have 153 children in care living in family placements.

3 OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 The strategy outlines the following:
- To prioritise early effective intervention to sustain families at home wherever possible and safe to do so.
 - Increase capacity in our fostering and adoption services with the aim of increasing the number of and availability of foster families and adopters.

- Ensure our children's homes are of the highest quality and a commitment to a purpose built children's campus.
- Increase the level and choice of accommodation for care leavers.
- Sustain and develop the specialist accommodation for young mothers in a 6-unit facility with built in support.
- Explore the use of social enterprise to further extend provision and accommodation support for care leavers.
- Lead on the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Adoption consortium.

4 ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 Prioritise early effective intervention to sustain families at home wherever possible and safe to do so.

North Lincolnshire implemented the Early Help Safeguarding Strategy that embraces early intervention to support families and prevent family breakdown. North Lincolnshire's Child and Family Support Services are currently working with 290 families and 700 children to support families staying together and contribute toward preventing children needing to be accommodated.

- 4.2 Increase capacity in our fostering and adoption services with the aim of increasing the number of and availability of foster families and adopters.

North Lincolnshire recruited 19 new foster carers in 2013/14 and 28 new adopters. We currently have 15 prospective adults/couples being assessed as foster carers and 17 for adoption.

- 4.3 Ensure our children's homes are of the highest quality and a commitment to a purpose built children's campus.

North Lincolnshire Council invested £1.2m in the new children's campus, Kingfisher Lodge. It was completed in September 2013 and recently judged "outstanding" in all areas by Ofsted.

- 4.4 Increase the level and choice of accommodation for care leavers.

North Lincolnshire have increased the number of 16 and 17 year olds Staying Put in their accommodation, 12 out of 20 young people.

The Council has supported the Post 16 Accommodation Support Service to become a social enterprise from the 1/4/2014. This will further develop supported living arrangements and suitable accommodation options for Care Leavers.

- 4.5 Lead on the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Adoption consortium. North Lincolnshire continues to lead and host a business contract for cross-region adoption. The Consortium has made significant progress and is responsible for the “Being Family” recruitment campaign as well as developing other areas of the adoption reforms. The region has seen a significant rise in adoptive families being assessed and being available for children needing adoption.
- 4.6 The Placement Sufficiency Strategy has supported the achievement of positive outcomes for children and young people as follows:
- There is improved short-term placement stability with less experiencing placements moves in the year.
 - There is reduced offending which is at an all-time low.
 - Education progress
 - Increase in those in Education Employment and Training at 19.
 - There is an increased number of young people Staying Put.
 - More children in care live within a family.
 - There are more children securing permanence.
 - There are more children being supported to stay with their family
 - The number of children in agency placements fell by 7 children, 20%.
 - The support from our corporate parents and partners is excellent. They have joined together to work with and celebrate the achievements of Children Looked After.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

There are no resource implications outlined in this report, the Council continues to prioritise and support Children in Care and care Leavers.

6 OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)

- 6.1 The integrated impact assessment was undertaken as part of the development of the strategy.

7 OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED

- 7.1 Children in care and care leavers are consulted and meet with elected members on a regular basis.
- 7.2 Children were central to the development and success of Kingfisher Lodge.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That Cabinet welcomes and supports the positive progress against the Placement Sufficiency Strategy in 2013/14.
- 8.2 That Cabinet commits to the ongoing development of local family based care to meet the new demands.

DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy 2013-2015

North Lincolnshire Council Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2013-2015