

**JOINT EDUCATION & YOUTH AND SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW
AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Date of Meeting	Thursday 25 th July, 2019
Report Subject	Improving the in-house offer for Out of County Placement for Children
Portfolio Holder	Cabinet Member for Social Services
Report Author	Chief Officer Social Services
Type of Report	Statutory

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Strategy details Flintshire County Council's commitment to ensure safe, high quality, support for children on the edge of care services and to the children we look after. Our aim is to support this cohort of children and young people so they are able to develop the skills and resilience to lead fulfilled lives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Committee scrutinise the proposed strategic intent, and underpinning actions, contained with the draft Support and Placement Strategy 2019 - 2022.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE IMPROVING THE IN-HOUSE OFFER FOR OUT OF COUNTY PLACEMENT FOR CHILDREN
1.01	Flintshire County Council is committed to ensuring safe, high quality support for children on the edge of care services and those we look after, so they are able to develop the skills and resilience to lead fulfilled lives.
1.02	Our main aim is to support families to care for their own children, and to prevent them, if safe to do so, from becoming a Child Looked After. This is what the majority of families want and where most children will best achieve their potential. To this end we have developed a Support and Placement Strategy aimed at those children who will only thrive where intervention is needed to prevent a child becoming looked after, or where a placement is needed to meet their assessed needs.

1.03	There is a local focus to enable children and young people to stay within their home county where possible, or within the North Wales region. Flintshire is geographically placed next to the border with England, so some children may be placed outside of Wales.
1.04	Where placements are commissioned we will seek to support locally based provision wherever possible, and where this is consistent with the needs, circumstances and wishes of the child/young person. Where local based provision is not available we will seek to provide support in North Wales before then considering the rest of Wales and England.
1.05	Outcome focused practice is essential to providing appropriate placements for children and to make sure that they are supported in what matters to them.
1.06	Our Strategy is set out in 4 sections and centres on 3 core ambitions:
1.07	<p>To safely reduce the number of children who need to be looked after. This means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enhancing our offer of effective and timely intensive family support • working with families so they are able to develop their resilience and, where needed, develop their own support arrangements, particularly for children aged 16+ • establishing a multi-disciplinary team to provide intensive assessment and support to prevent problems from escalating and to support effective community based placements
1.08	<p>To support looked after children in local high quality placements. This means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creating more local authority foster care placements • targeted growth in the availability of independent fostering placements • working with local and regional providers to reshape provision to meet local need • stimulate growth in specialist provision for children and young people who have complex mental and emotional health needs • developing our approach to commissioning with improved referrals enabling better placement matching
1.09	<p>To improve outcomes for looked after children. This means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivering our Corporate Parenting Strategy • working with the independent sector to have a stronger focus on delivering positive outcomes
1.10	The Strategy provides an analysis of the statistical data about our looked after children and placement types and provides an analysis of the challenges, current solutions and further opportunities to enable us to deliver on our 3 core ambitions.

	<p>In summary the analysis shows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A need to strengthen targeted/intensive support for children and families on the edge of care • There are opportunities to side skill our workforce so that young people can access timely therapeutic support, whilst working with BCU to enhance access to assessment and support • There is a need to enhance Flintshire’s fostering service and expand service models • We need to invest in a model of residential provision that supports good quality assessments to facilitate placement reunification and effective long term placement planning. • A number of local residential providers have plans for expansion, which presents an opportunity to work in partnership to align the provision to meet local needs • Children aged 16+ often have complex needs and placement options are limited we need a strategic approach to supporting the accommodation and support needs of young people aged 16-18 and for carer leavers
1.11	<p>In response an action plan has been developed to translate our strategic intention into a set of deliverable actions. This plan involves:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Safely reduce the number of children who need to be looked after</p> <p>1.1 Expand our Family Group Conference service to support more families to develop their own solutions, and resilience, to appropriately care for their children</p> <p>1.2 Work with Housing to develop new housing and support options for children aged 16+ and for care leavers</p> <p>1.3 Work with schools to minimise exclusions</p> <p>1.4 Review the scope, focus and operating model of our edge of care services to ensure effective and timely intensive family support</p> <p>1.5 Establish a multi-disciplinary team to provide intensive assessment and support to prevent problems from escalating and to support effective community based placements</p> <p>1.6 Increase the number of Special Guardianship Order arrangements so that more children are appropriately supported under this framework</p>
1.12	<p style="text-align: center;">Support looked after children in local high quality placements</p> <p>2.1 Implement the ‘Mockingbird model of foster care to extend the number and type of fostering placements available within area</p> <p>2.2 Develop foster carer friendly policies to attract and retain foster carers. Specifically seek approval for a Council Tax reduction scheme for foster carers scheme and a Policy for Adaptations to foster carer homes</p> <p>2.3 Work with a partner agency to develop a registered Children’s Home to provide short term (up to 12 weeks) intensive support and assessment to de-escalate crisis/emergency situations and develop sustainable permanence plans</p>

	<p>2.4 Work across North Wales to develop a regional Market position statement for residential and fostering provision to realign current independent provision to meet the needs of looked after children in North Wales and to develop provision where there are identified gaps</p> <p>2.5 Implement a new referral and matching process for placements so that we are able to make positive commissioning choices</p>
1.13	<p style="text-align: center;">Improve outcomes for looked after children</p> <p>3.1 Deliver the 2019/20 Action Plan for our Corporate Parenting Strategy</p> <p>3.2 Implement an outcome contract monitoring framework that has been piloted with 2 registered Childrens Homes to enable a clear focus on the quality of provision and the outcomes that are being secured.</p>
1.14	<p>The outcomes that we are seeking to achieve through the delivery of this work are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved health and well-being • Better educational achievement and skills attainment • Improved relationships within family, peers and friends • Reducing high risk behaviours • Ensuring young people are ready for independent living

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>Safely and appropriately supporting young people in the most effective placement to meet their needs, through enhancing family and fostering options, will also be the most cost effective way of delivering our services. For some children specialist residential placements will always be the best provision for them. This Strategy will help to ensure high quality local/regional residential placements that secure positive outcomes and placement stability.</p>

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	<p>A Regional consultation event has taken place with residential Providers in North Wales. The event looked at how existing provision can better aligned to meet the needs of looked children in North Wales. This work has informed the associated action plan in this Strategy.</p>
3.02	<p>Consultation and engagement has taken place with looked after children through our Participation Group as Part of the development of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Action Plan.</p>
3.03	<p>The Children's Services Forum will have a specific role in overseeing the Strategy and the delivery of the Corporate Parenting action plan.</p>

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	Failure to deliver this Strategy is likely to result in a continued increase in the number of looked after children without the opportunity to fully explore and deploy intensive support which can, in some cases appropriately support family resilience and maintain family arrangements. There is also a risk of an over reliance on costly provision through independent fostering and residential providers, with a lack of appropriate placement choice within the local/regional area.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – Draft Support and Placement Strategy : 2019/2023

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None. Contact Officer: Neil Ayling Telephone: 01352 702500 E-mail: Neil.J.Ayling@flintshire.gov.uk

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	Looked After Child Looked after children are children and young people who are in public care and looked after by the state. This includes those who are subject to a care order or temporarily classed as looked after on a planned basis for short breaks or respite care. The term is also used to describe ‘accommodated’ children and young people who are looked after on a voluntary basis at the request of, or by agreement with, their parents.