

**Children
Looked After
Placements
Sufficiency
Strategy**

**2022-
2025**

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1. Introduction

1.1 Context

In Cumbria we believe that children are best cared for in their own homes. The Council works with families, communities, universal and targeted services to ensure that where possible this happens. When unmet needs are identified, Cumbria's Early Help Offer and Think Family approach are crucial in trying to prevent circumstances from escalating. Cumbria works to a 'Continuum of Need', whereby Early Help Services form part of a continuum of support to respond to different needs. This ranges from thriving families requiring minimal support through to families who need more help and statutory intervention. Where it is not possible for children to be cared for at home, Cumbria strives to offer the best possible placements in care.

1.2 Purpose

This strategy outlines Cumbria's aspirations, vision, and approach to providing sufficient, safe, and appropriate homes for children looked after and care leavers over the next 3 years. It specifies how Cumbria intends to meet its Sufficiency Duty in section 22G of the Children Act 1989 which requires local authorities to take steps to provide, as far as reasonably practical, sufficient accommodation for looked after children within the local authorities' area, that meets the need of the child and allows the child to live near their home.

1.3 Content

Cumbria's current position is reflected within this strategy. It considers national and local contexts plus wider influencing factors within the placements sector, with local strengths and challenges identified. It sets out key priorities and direction for the Council over the next few years, to develop and improve service provision so that Cumbria's children and young people have access to the best possible placements to meet their individual needs. There is a recognition that placements sufficiency is very challenging nationally in the current climate, with high demand across all provision types. Therefore, innovation will be key throughout the delivery of this strategy.

The Sufficiency Analysis (appendix 1) provides further detail regarding the demand, supply, and support across placements provision. The Action Plan (appendix 2) sets out activities, performance targets and timescales for achieving the key strategic priorities. By working towards meeting these priorities the Council will be better placed to provide the best placements possible for children in or leaving care and meet its sufficiency duty.

1.4 The Voice of Children and Care Leavers

Views of children looked after and care leavers have informed the development of this strategy and will continue to be involved in its implementation and review. These have been presented in various ways including through the Children in Care Council, Care Leavers Forum, and Respect Campaign. Cumbria is committed to co-production with children and families where possible in the development of sufficient placements.

1.5 Relevant Legislation, Strategies and Plans

This strategy supports the delivery of and is aligned to the below:

- Cumbria Council Plan 2018 - 2022
- Public Sector Equality Duty 2011
- Cumbria Children Looked After Strategy 2019-2023
- Cumbria Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)
- Children and Families Act 2014
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations
- Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children 2009
- The Adoption and Children Act 2002
- Cumbria's Promise to Children Looked After
- The Respect Campaign
- Fostering and Adoption Service Plans
- The Children's Improvement Plan
- Cumbria's Foster Care Market Position Statement 2020
- Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012
- Review of Residential Care in England 2016
- Review of Foster Care in England 2018
- Reforms to unregulated provision for children in care and care leavers

1.6 Meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty

This Duty is becoming increasingly relevant to local placements sufficiency. The profile and needs of children looked after changes all the time as Cumbria becomes more diverse in terms of ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender. The profile of disabled young people is also changing over time as medical science evolves and changes to assessment result for instance in more children being diagnosed with autism. These changes have been addressed in the analysis, the Equality Impact Assessment and the action plan.

2. Cumbria's Vision

Cumbria's Children Looked After Strategy (2019-23) vision, developed with children in care, includes:
"We believe that children who are looked after in Cumbria need to be given the same adventures and opportunities as any other child, and have all the love they need to have a good life. They should be cared for in a home where they are treated as part of the family."

Aligned to this, in terms of placements sufficiency, Cumbria's vision is to secure high-quality homes and support to enable all children looked after and care leavers to have the same prospects to achieve as other Cumbria children and young people.

The quality, location and stability of homes and families are fundamental to support children and young people to have the best life chances possible. Cumbria strives to provide every child with the best possible family and home environment, consider their wishes and feelings in relation to this, and place children in homes that nurture their opportunities to thrive and attain. Cumbria aspires to have varied high quality placement options available locally to meet wide-ranging and diverse needs.

3. Children Looked After Populations

3.1 National

Key Data:

The number of children looked after on 31 March 2020 increased to 80,080 (+2% from 2019). This is a rate of 67/10,000 children.

Placement proportions:

- Foster care - 72%, of which 14% were with a relative or friend
- Secure units, children's homes or semi-independent living accommodation - 13%
- Living with parents - 7%
- Living in the community, independently, or residential employment - 3%
- Placed for adoption - 3%
- Other residential settings (including care homes, schools or custody) - 2%

Stability: 68% of children had one placement during the year but 11% had three or more.

Location:

58% of all CLA placements were inside council boundaries

20% were not placed within 20 miles of home

Children in a foster placement are most likely to be placed 20 miles or less from home

Source: ONS 'Main Findings': children's social care in England 2020

3.2 Cumbria

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimates that in 2019 Cumbria's population was 498,888 persons of which in the region of 102,000 were aged 0-19 years. For further wider population data see Cumbria's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Observatory link at <https://www.cumbriaobservatory.org.uk/>.

Key Data:

There continues to be an overall increase in the number and rate of children looked after. On 31 March 2021 739 Cumbria children were looked after (79.9/10,000), compared to 721 in 2020.

Profiles:

- Gender and Ethnicity - 59% male and 94% white British
- Age - 42% were 10-15 years, although this has reduced alongside an increase to 17% for children aged 1-4 years
- Placement Order - 91% have a legal order and 9% S20 voluntary accommodation

Placement proportions:

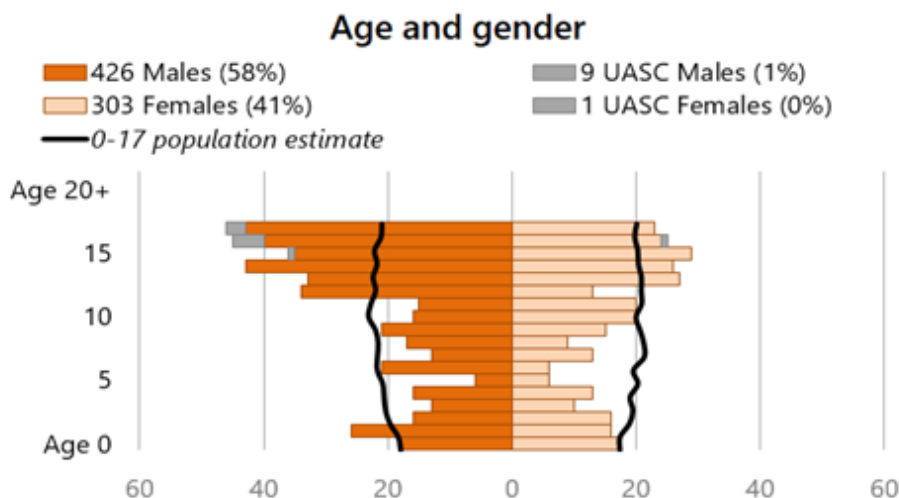
- Foster Care - 522 / 71%, of which 12% with a relative or friend, compared to 73% in March 2020
- Secure units, children's homes or semi-independent living accommodation – 97 / 13%
- Living with parents – 65 / 9%
- Living in the community, independently, or residential employment – 20 / 2%
- Placed for adoption – 23 / 3%
- Other residential settings (including care homes, schools or custody) – 12 / 2%

Stability: Placement stability improved over the year with 6.5% of children experiencing 3 or more placements compared to 8% last year.

Location: The number of children placed away from their home locality increased, with 27% living more than 20 miles from home and outside Cumbria compared to 23% last year.

Source: Cumbria CLA (SSDA903) Submission Report 2020/21 / Performance Team

The graph below reflects the age and gender profile of children looked after at 31 March 2021. For further profile information please see appendix 1.



4. National and Regional Overview

Foster Care

At the end of March 2020, across England there were around 44,500 fostering households, around 75,300 approved foster carers, looking after about 56,500 children. There was a 10% decrease in applications to become a carer from March 2019.

While Local Authorities continued to have two thirds share of foster care (of which around 25% are family and friends) this fell by around 1,500, or 4%. The number of Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) carers grew by 430, 2% overall, but the growth was in private IFAs since voluntary IFAs had around 100 fewer carers than last year.

The number of households and carers has remained similar at a time when the number of children in care is at its highest level, and children are entering the system at an older age, resulting in a growing adolescent care population.

On 31 March 2020, there were 14,995 fostering households with 300 IFAs, of which around 51% were registered with IFAs owned by the 6 largest providers of IFA places in England.

Nationally and regionally foster care placements have been unable to keep pace with demand experiencing recruitment and retention challenges alongside other impacts such as the Staying Put initiative. This has led to less availability of placements particularly for children with more complex needs, larger sibling groups and older children.

Data source: ONS Fostering in England 2019 to 2020: main findings published November 2020.

Residential Care

There continues to be an increase in demand nationally in terms of children looked after requiring residential care placements.

In response to this the number of new children's homes in England continues to rise. On 31 March 2021 there were 2,706 children's homes of all types (including secure, residential special schools, short-breaks and children's homes), a 10% increase (246 homes) from the previous year. These homes were registered for 12,732 places, a 5% increase from 2020 (compared to only +1% from 2019 to 2020).

In relation to children's homes only, there was an 11% increase (compared to 19% last year) and an 8% increase in places (compared to 3%). Although there was a smaller gap this year, this continues the trend of the number of new homes rising faster than places, mainly caused by new children's homes being smaller than those that closed. The average number of places in a new children's home was 3.3, compared to 4.7 for a closing home.

Although all regions saw an increase in the number of children's homes they are not distributed evenly across the country. Around a quarter of all children's homes and places are in the North West region, which accounted for almost a quarter of new places during the year. The South West, London, East of England, and the South East each accounted for less than 10% of new places.

The number of residential special schools has fallen to 126. This is a decrease of 7% (10 schools / 3,685 places) which continues the fall observed since 2016, when there were 165.

There were 13 secure children's homes on 31 March 2021, offering 234 places. There were no secure children's homes in London or the West Midlands, while there were 4 in the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber region. No new secure homes opened during 20/21.

There has been an increase in residential family centres. On 31 March 2021 there was a 2% rise to 59 centres, with the number of places rising by 3% to 325.

The national picture has clear impacts regionally and locally. A high number of children are placed in children's homes the North West from other regions, reducing availability to North West authorities who may then need to place further from home. The reduction in size of new homes means the number of placements has not increased at the same rate and increased placement costs. The lack of secure homes is resulting in long waiting lists and children's homes are increasingly required for highly complex needs placements, some bordering on secure. However, due to high demand across the sector, authorities are often struggling to obtain placements for complex children.

Data source: ONS 'Main Findings: children's social care in England 2021' last updated July 2021.

Leaving Care

Local authorities have a duty to provide sufficient, suitable accommodation for care leavers in their local area. Nationally during the 2020 financial year 85% of care leavers aged 19, 20 and 21 were recorded as living in suitable accommodation.

The introduction of Staying Put in 2014 has enabled more children to remain living with their foster carers post 18. Also, a number of Staying Close schemes operate across England, some with the support from the Department For Education's (DfE) Innovation Programme, helping care leavers moving on from residential care to continue receiving support from their residential home. There does however remain some inequalities in relation to housing and support in place for care leavers based on the nature of their final placement before leaving care.

The Government is seeking to introduce new national standards for independent and semi-independent provision overseen by an Ofsted. This provision plays an increasingly important role in meeting the needs of some children in care and care leavers aged 16 and 17. Regulation will ensure provision is more consistently at expected standards, driving and improving outcomes for young people. The Government consulted on initial proposals during 2021 and responses are now being considered.

There has been a significant increase in the number of Supported and Independent Living (SAILs) Providers offering and providing placements to children in care and care leavers aged 16-18 years nationally and regionally. Although purchasing systems such as that operating in the North West include Minimum Standards requirements, Ofsted regulation and inspections would standardise national expectations raise quality across the sector.

Adoption

3,440 children looked after were adopted during the 19/20 financial year, down 4% from the previous year, which continues the fall since a peak of 5,360 adoptions in 2015.

The average age of a child at adoption is 3 years old. 63% of looked after children who were adopted had a final period of care lasting less than 2 years, down from 65% in 2019.

The average time between a child entering care and the date they are placed for adoption remained the same as last year, at 1 year and 3 months. The average time between entry to care and the decision being taken that a child should be placed for adoption increased from 6 to 7 months, and the time between entry into care and adoption remained at 2 years.

The ongoing reduction in number of children looked after being adopted reduces the number of exits from care.

Unregulated Placements

Since September 2021, providers in England are no longer able to care for children under 16 in an unregulated placement. Local authorities must (subject to some limited exceptions) place looked after children who are under the age of 16 in either foster care or a children's home that is registered with Ofsted. This will further increase demand for placements in a challenging market.

5. Cumbria: Sufficiency Summary

Sufficiency Duty:

Cumbria is meeting its sufficiency duty in terms of securing placements through a range of provision to meet the varied needs of children in care. However, demand for placements remains high. A key part of Cumbria's approach is a focus on prevention and exits from care. Increased support for individuals, families and communities can help to prevent some children needing to be in care and improve outcomes for children and families. In terms of supply, internal placement provision cannot meet demand, necessitating increasingly effective, clear, and accountable partnership working with external provisions.

5.1 Prevention: Early Help

Cumbria has invested in its Early Help services to identify and support children and families in need at an earlier stage. The impact of these services is reflected in the number of children who are prevented from requiring more intensive support and needing to become looked after.

Cumbria's Early Help Partnership Strategy 2020-2023¹ demonstrates "our commitment to **Think Family**. This requires us to work holistically with families in communities, and schools, based on relationships and collaborative working, through early identification and intervention." Our vision is that "In Cumbria all children will be a part of a strong family network living in a thriving community being happy and healthy and able to succeed with a sense of pride".

The full detail of this offer is included within the embedded strategy. As referred to earlier, the 'Early Help Continuum of Need' is key to this offer. As part of this, the 'Early Help Assessment – Signs of Well-being and Success' strengths-based approach is used at the earliest point to target support that will make a difference to the lives of children and families. Early Help and Family Support Panels and a Team around the Family (TAF) are then developed to respond appropriately to the child and family's needs.

¹ <https://cumbriasafeguardingchildren.co.uk/professionals/earlyhelp/earlyhelpstrategy.asp>

5.2 Exits: Adoption, Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) and Return Home

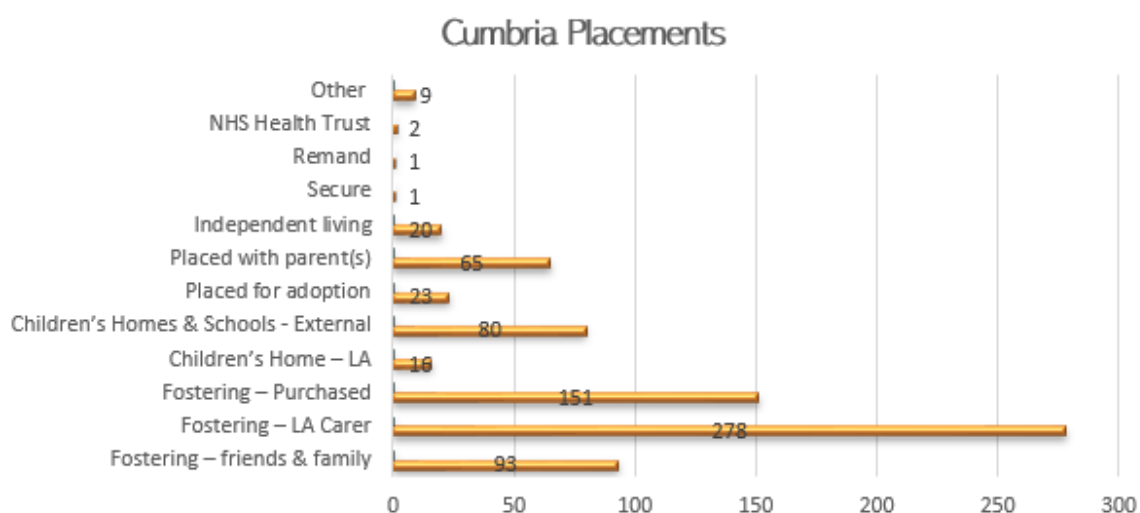
The highest number (45) and proportion (23%) of children leaving care during the 20/21 financial year returned home. Exits due to SGOs rose to 38 (20%), higher than the national figure of 13% for 19/20.

There was a noticeable reduction in children leaving care to adoption in Cumbria during 20/21. 25 children were adopted (13%), a decrease from 21% the previous year, although figures remain higher than national. During the year, 31 children were matched with adopters, 20 adopter households were approved and 49 Children Looked After had a permanence plan of adoption made, an increase from 37 in the previous year. This shows increased demand and widens the sufficiency gap. During 19/20 there was a delay in time taken to assess new adopters because of Covid restrictions.

Work is ongoing to embed the work of the Coast-to-Coast Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) which went live in April 2021. Cumbria's Adoption Support Team continues to provide a wide range of services. Adopters are supported through family finding, matching and placement through to the final order and beyond. Support is provided from an earlier stage to prevent difficulties which impact adversely on the child or lead to breakdowns.

5.3 Care: Placement Types

The graph below reflects where Cumbria children were living on 31.3.21.



5.3.1 Foster Care

The overall number of children in foster care in Cumbria has remained static over the last financial year with an overall reduction in proportion from 73% to 71% of children in care. There has however been an increase in internal foster placements and reduction in agency, following a focus on Cumbria's recruitment and retention of carers. This differs from the national and regional picture where IFA placements have increased and Local Authority decreased. The number of IFA carers in Cumbria has also remained static, although the number placed from other local authorities in Cumbria has increased. The challenge to meet demand continues with a particular shortage locally for siblings, teenagers with complex needs, parent and child and emergency placements.

5.3.2 Residential Homes and Schools

The number of children in residential placements has remained static. On 31 March 2021 there were 80 children placed in external homes and schools and 16 internal. There was been a decrease in the number of new external placements made over the last year (53). There are specialist schools in South Lakeland, and majority of homes are in the more accessible locations of Carlisle, Eden and South Lakeland. Cumbria now has four internal children's homes for up to 20 placements across the county.

The number of placements with residential homes located outside Cumbria is high considering the quantity located within county. However, a larger proportion were living inside Cumbria at the end of the last financial year (52%) compared to the previous year. Cumbria continues to strengthen relationships with local residential providers, placing children close to home where possible. Children placed outside Cumbria are often in homes close to the border or require specialist placements. A substantial number (163 on 31 March 2021) of residential placements in Cumbria are occupied by children from other local authorities.

5.3.3 Care Leavers

The number of children leaving care aged 16-18 increased from 47 during 2019 to 79 in 2021 with more care leavers from the Barrow and South Lakeland district. Increased numbers of children in care, including those in the 16+ age range, suggests this will continue. However, this is hard to predict with certainty due to small overall numbers and a reduced proportion of 10-15 year olds.

Cumbria continues to perform well in relation to the number of 19-21 year old care leavers living in suitable accommodation (96%). There are various potential accommodation options including Homestays and Staying Put, with highest proportions recorded as living in independent living accommodation followed by with parents or relatives. Cumbria commissions a Housing Related Support for Young People (16-24) service where priority is given to young people for whom the Authority has a statutory duty, including care leavers.

There is an increasing demand for suitable supported and independent living accommodation for care leavers. Challenges include options available for more complex young people and move-on accommodation. In March 2021 there were 19 Cumbria young people aged 16-18 in group living / floating support with accommodation provision.

Note: The DfE published guidance on Joint Housing Protocols for Care Leavers in October 2020, and in 2021 Cumbria launched its Care Leavers Housing Protocol, working closely with districts across Cumbria.

6. Integrated Working / Commissioning

Integrated working with universal, targeted and specialist services (see appendix 1) impacts on securing and sustaining quality placements. Externally specific work is ongoing with local Health / Integrated Care Systems (ICS), other local authorities, placement providers, Cumbria Safeguarding Children's Partnership, regulatory bodies such as Ofsted, Care Inspectorate and Care Quality Commission, commissioned support services and voluntary providers.

Commissioning includes regular provider engagement, forums, exchange days, the development and procurement of frameworks / purchasing systems, quality monitoring and ongoing process review and change. Commissioning is increasingly collaborative with neighbouring authorities, for example through Placements Northwest and the Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool, Cumbria and Lancashire (BBCL) DfE funded Foster Care market analysis and development. Cumbria is also advancing collaborative working with Northeast authorities.

Market Opportunities include purchasing systems that Cumbria refers to across all placements types (Fostering, Residential Children's Homes, Supported and Independent Living, Independent Special School provision. Further information is available via the Chest <https://www.the-chest.org.uk/>.

Local Government Restructure plans in relation to Cumbria transitioning to a unitary authority will influence existing partnership working. Any impact on processes and procedures related to placement sufficiency will be assessed and addressed as early as possible to ensure a smooth transition. This restructure will provide opportunities for more effective integrated working with existing district councils and other partners.

Budget Pressures continue to be challenging for the Council and other public sector partners, facing huge financial difficulties with finite budgets. The Council is required to meet increasing costly placement needs, particularly in residential care, whilst reducing expenditure, due to cuts in funding, competing pressures and increased statutory duties and regulations. Whilst quality of care is paramount, the Council requires placements to be 'Best Value'. Therefore, efficient, and effective integrated partnership working and commissioning within the local authority and across multi-agencies is crucial to deliver improvements in placements sufficiency.

7. Key Strengths and Challenges

Area	Strengths	Challenges
Integrated Working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinated internal processes. Established working with local authorities across the North West. Engagement with external providers. Multi-agency approaches to micro-commissioning of complex placements. Coordinated working with Health and Integrated Care Systems to meet related statutory duties including clearer accountabilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budgetary pressures across the public sector. To establish working relationships with North East authorities. Different legislation in Scotland can cause barriers to placements over the border. Potential impact of planned local government restructure in Cumbria.
Commissioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The development of purchasing systems. Clear contracts in place. Quality Assurance Processes in place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop clear market management in partnership with other Local Authorities. Establish effective external quality monitoring processes. Implement new ways of working (i.e. embed purchasing systems). Ensure a suitable mix of local provision can meet demand. Develop systems and processes including digital technologies.
Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Help services including the Think Family approach, helps prevent children become accommodated. Cumbria's outreach and respite provision in Carlisle / Kendal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of children entering care continues to increase.
Exits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of exits through returning home. Increased number of SGOs. The Coast-to-Coast RAA is developing new ways of working regionally to increase adoptions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of children leaving care remains less than those entering. Reduction in adoptions during 2020-2021. Recruitment of adopters for sibling groups, older children, and children with complex health needs.
Fostering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exchange days with IFAs and LAs in the North West. Increased number of 'Bridge to Foster' placements. Geographical spread of carers across Cumbria. Increased number of internal foster carers. Revised sub-regional Foster Care Framework to go live in 2022. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of provision to meet need locally and nationally. Shortage of placements for children with complex needs, older and sibling groups. Increased demand for parent and child placements. Continued recruitment of internal foster carers. Lack of emergency provision.

Area	Strengths	Challenges
Residential children's homes and schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cumbria's four internal long stay children's homes. The quantity of local residential and school placements. The quality of homes across Cumbria are good, the majority rated good or outstanding by Ofsted. The purchasing system for Independent Educational Placements for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities went live in 2021. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High number of children placed in Cumbria from other Local Authorities. Shortage of homes locally for children with more complex needs. High cost of residential placements, particularly for more complex. Provider reluctance to be on purchasing systems. Staying Close options. Provider consideration of local need and impact when opening new homes.
Leaving Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High proportion of Cumbria care leavers living in suitable accommodation. Cumbria's Staying Put and Homestays supported lodgings and outreach provision. Supported living available for 3 young people aged 16-17 at one of Cumbria's internal children's homes. North West Supported & Independent Living Purchasing System requirements and Minimum Standards assessment of quality standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact following Ofsted regulations being introduced on Supported Accommodation for Care Leavers aged 16-18 years. To develop the local offer of a range of suitable accommodation to care leavers aged 16+ with clear pathways. Ensuring Supported & Independent Living providers meet required standards.
Stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stability of placements during 2020 Covid 19 outbreak and lockdowns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To reduce the number of unplanned moves.

8. Strategic Priorities

Strategic Priorities This section sets out Cumbria's planned strategic priorities and direction over the next 3 years. Innovation is key whilst reviewing and implementing new ways of working to improve placement sufficiency, particularly during the Local Government Review in Cumbria and change to becoming two unitary authorities from 1 April 2023.

	Strategic Priority
Integrated Working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build upon work with local authorities across the North West, regionally and sub-regionally, for more effective commissioning and information sharing. Expand integrated working with local authorities in the North East. Embed effective multi-agency working practices with local public and private sector organisations, to support children in care placements. Young people to be fully involved in their placement plans and reviews. Work with partners and providers to adopt solution focused and innovative approaches to tackle the challenges and manage the risks of placing children with complex needs and challenging behaviours.
Commissioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve market management, utilising and developing the appropriate mix of local provision. Purchasing systems to be developed and utilised in fair / transparent commissioning Monitoring processes to ensure children are placed in high quality placements.
Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embed Early Help Services, increasing support at home and in communities to prevent children from entering care unnecessarily.

	Strategic Priority
Exits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure suitable permanence plans are in place and realised in a timely manner, with exits from care progressed as quickly as possible (i.e. though returning home, SGOs or adoption). To embed the work of the Coast-to-Coast Regional Adoption Agency, ensuring Cumbria children are moved to adoptive families as quickly as possible, and that support services are effectively implemented preventing breakdowns.
Fostering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to increase internal foster care provision, including carers willing to take siblings, older children, and children with more complex needs Work closely with external providers to increase local provision and utilise Cumbria placements for Cumbria children. This will include implementing the new regional purchasing system in 2022 and securing more enhanced and bridge to foster care placements.
Residential Homes and Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain occupancy and quality levels in Cumbria's internal children's homes, moving children on as appropriate. To consider development of further homes to meet demand in line with identified local needs and gaps. Strengthen relationships with external providers, placing children as close to home as possible, utilising more Cumbria placements for Cumbria children. New residential provision setting up in Cumbria to be monitored and developed to meet local need such as for more complex children. To embed Cumbria's use of the purchasing system for Independent Educational Placements for Special Educational Need and Disabilities (SEND).
Leaving Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to transition young people to Staying Put arrangements and expand Cumbria's Homestays supported lodgings and outreach services. Review and develop a range of accommodation options to meet the demand and varied needs of care leavers aged 16+. To include more options for move on, including Staying Close arrangements following residential care.
Stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management oversight and Independent Review Officer involvement to continue to track and improve stability across all placement types, preventing drift and providing additional support where required.

9. Implementation and Review

Action Plan and Continuous Improvement

An updated action plan is being developed implement the strategic priorities. This specifies the activities, performance indicators, targets and timescales. The strategy and action plan are working documents to be adapted to changing circumstances to enable continuous improvement. Current practices will be subject to challenge and change, and the Council will work collaboratively and innovatively with partners to improve placement sufficiency.

Governance Arrangements

The implementation of this strategy and action plan will be led by the Council's People Directorate. Overall responsibility for its implementation will be held by Cumbria's Quality and Development Board who will monitor progress.

Regular updates will be provided to: Children's Services Directorate Management Team; Quality Development Board; Corporate Parenting Board and Think Family and Early Help Programme Board. An annual review will be carried out of the delivery against the activities and targets set out in the Action Plan.

10. Conclusion

The successful delivery of this strategy will result in children looked after and care leavers living in safe, secure, and appropriate homes that can best meet their needs. This will support them in achieving their potential and having the best life chances possible.

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