

0 - 25 Children and Young People Placement Commissioning Strategy

2022 - 2027

A five-year commissioning strategy to build and strengthen the London Borough of Sutton's successful accommodation and support offer for children and young people in our care and care-experienced young people.

To ensure good quality, local provision of placements, accommodation and support informed by our children and young people, which offers choice and makes best use of available resources.

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1. Context

In 2016, the London Borough of Sutton set an ambitious Commissioning Strategy for Looked after Children. This strategy has celebrated much success in expanding and improving the borough's home and support offer, and ensuring placement quality, suitability and stability of placements for the children and young people in our care.

Targeted Expansion of Offer

Since 2016, the London Borough of Sutton has expanded its home and support offer for children and young people in care and care-experienced young people.

In response to a steep increase in the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people (UASC) welcomed to the borough, particularly since 2018, a new flexible model of key worker support has been commissioned. This also makes effective use of available council-owned properties. This now forms an integral part of the borough's care leaver accommodation offer and pathway in support of young people's successful transition to independence.

The borough has developed its own Children's Home provision within the borough, which currently provides four home placements. The home was inspected by Ofsted in February 2022 and rated as "Good".

In 2021-22, the borough has increased the amount of quota housing available for care leavers from 24 to 27 one bedroom/bedsit flats and from 1 to 3 two-bedroom properties. These housing allocations are key to enabling young people to live independently and to prevent overstays in supported accommodation when young people are ready to move on. We will continue to review the borough's housing quota

levels to support the transition of our care-experienced young people to adulthood and independence.

High Placement Quality

The London Borough of Sutton strives to ensure that all of the children and young people in our care reside in placements which are of a high standard and support achievement of successful outcomes.

Commissioning and Placement Teams in Sutton work in close partnership to ensure delivery of a robust quality assurance framework to monitor the quality and performance of providers and placements.

As at Dec 2021, 93% (51) of our active regulated care placement providers (55) had an Ofsted 'Good' or 'Outstanding' rating.

All care home and independent fostering agency providers whose rating is lowered by Ofsted to "requires improvement" are monitored by a Children's Joint Intelligence Group. Where necessary, a new placement is found. If the child or young person is safe and there is progression in the care plan, an action plan is developed between Children's Services, Commissioning and the provider to address key areas. These plans have resulted in the improvement of two providers' Ofsted ratings whilst placements have been stabilised with minimum impact on the care plan.

Semi-independent provision for care-experienced or UASC young people aged over 16 years is unregulated, although Ofsted will introduce a new regulatory framework for 16-17 year old provision in 2023. We have quality assured 75% of our active semi-independent accommodation providers in the last 12 month period¹.

Opportunities for improvement have been identified with our large supported accommodation contracted offer, which is currently commissioned to provide for 37 care-experienced and vulnerable young homeless people across 8 sites in the borough. This 2022-2027 commissioning strategy will address this by remodelling the commissioned offer to support targeted high quality provision in these properties.

¹ Remaining providers represent recent placements with QA scheduled, or have had QA activity in the last 14 months.

Local and Stable Placements

Where it is safe and appropriate to do so, we strive to match children and young people to a home placement in or close to the London Borough of Sutton.

In December 2021, 69% (157) of the children and young people in our care were placed within 20 miles of their home address. Care placement opportunities within the Sutton footprint are limited, particularly for children and young people with a higher level of need or requiring specialist support, however, they are increasing as new providers establish themselves in the borough and Sutton Council establishes its own care home provision.

In 2021, only 2% of care leavers were placed more than 20 miles from Sutton. 48% of our care leavers are accommodated in Sutton. In 2019, there were 45 supported accommodation placements in the borough. This will increase to 69 placements in 2022, with a further 11 units of accommodation due to open in the borough by 2023. This has enabled the expansion of the in-borough floating key work support offer. The properties secured in Sutton for care-experienced young people, in liaison with Sutton Housing Partnership and social housing landlord partners, represent excellent homes for a supported transition to independence.

Placement stability is a key indicator of placement suitability. Sutton has recorded an improving trend in placement stability reporting 70% of children and young people in placements for two or more years in 2021. This percentage has gradually increased every year since 2018. The figure for children with three or more placements in a year has fluctuated over time and related to difficulties in finding the right place first time and liberty protection standards needs.

Robust Commissioning Arrangements with Optimum Use of Resources

The 2016 commissioning strategy provided clear guidance and supporting arrangements to enable the brokerage of placements to the most favourable commissioning arrangement.

Sutton's Placements Team has achieved much success in managing outcomes for children and young people and achieving best value for care placement spend by following this pathway, as set out below. In doing so, they have secured competitive

and favourable rates on Sutton Terms and Conditions, wherever it was possible to do so.

1. Where it is appropriate to do so, in-house placement options are exhausted first. These options comprise the Council's in-house foster carers, the council-run Children's Home recently established, or 'Staying Put' provision.

40% of foster placements were met by Sutton's in-house foster carers, as at Dec 2021. A separate Fostering Strategy is available which sets out the borough's intention for in-house fostering growth.

Sutton Children's Social Care have succeeded in increasing the number of young people 'Staying Put' with families after foster placements from 10 in 2019 to 19 in 2022. Securing 'staying put' arrangements provides a stable and supportive family environment for young people.

2. London Borough of Sutton block contract commitments are prioritised for care-experienced young people that require supported accommodation. Waiting lists are managed for these services to ensure maximum occupancy rates are achieved.
3. London Borough of Sutton Framework arrangements are then used for independent fostering agency and semi-independent accommodation placements.

Sutton has continued to report high usage of these Framework arrangements, which successfully secure favourable rates for the borough.

Over the last four years Sutton's independent fostering agency framework has provided 46% of foster home placements.

77% of Supported Accommodation or Semi-independent Accommodation (SIA) placements are made via the borough's Framework and block contract arrangements.

4. Regional commissioning arrangements are then explored for children in care. Sutton subscribes to the London Care Services brokerage arrangement for children's care homes and some foster placements.

Providers brokered through the London Care Service arrangements have provided a further 42% of homes. These arrangements offer the benefit of capped placement rates which are negotiated on an annual basis on behalf of participating boroughs.

5. Where the aforementioned options are exhausted, placements are secured through a spot purchase negotiated arrangement.

Sutton shares the challenges experienced by many boroughs in securing homes to meet the following placement needs. These are invariably met by spot purchase.

- Emergency placement and assessment provision, specifically for older adolescents.
- Suitable registered residential placements for 16 - 17 year olds.
- Females aged 14 -17 entering care.
- Registered placements which offer DOLS (LPS) standard placements (for step down).
- Secure placements.
- C&YP with disabilities (specifically learning disabilities and behavioural and mental health needs).
- Focused homes and semi-independent accommodation for 16 - 17 year olds.

2. What Sutton Children and Young People in our Care Have Told Us

This strategy and its subsequent delivery will be driven by the views and experiences of the children and young people in our care and our care-experienced young people. This will ensure that services are inclusive, relevant and make the best use of the council's resources to achieve strong outcomes for children and young people.

In February - March 2022, we asked our children and young people in care and care leavers to complete a "Tell Us Home and Support" survey. The survey was designed to gauge children and young people's general well being in a number of areas, seek their feedback on their homes and the support provided and determine what was important to them.

We received responses from a broad profile of 72 children and young people to the survey, representing 14% of the children in our care and 12% of our supported care leaver population.

61% of respondents said they were "happy" or "very happy" with things in their lives now, with the majority citing happiness with personal safety and friendships. A large majority of children in our care also confirmed they were happy with their family's ability to buy the things they needed. Whereas school life, family life and access to somewhere outside to have fun had the highest number of responses reporting unhappiness. A good majority of care leavers stated that they were happy with their progress in education and learning however some reported they were unhappy with the local choice of things to do and their physical health.

90% of respondents said they felt safe "always" or "most of the time". This positive response rate was quite different by cohort with 97% of the children and young people in our care stating they felt safe "always" or "most of the time" compared to 85% of our care leavers.

76% of respondents said they felt well supported or cared for "always" or "most of the time". The positive response rate for this question was also different by cohort. 85% of the children and young people in our care that responded stated they felt well cared for "always" or "most of the time" compared to 69% for our care leavers.

When asked to select up to five things that were most important in having a good life, our respondents prioritised the following:

1. A nice home to live in
2. Good mental health
3. A good job or career
4. Good friends
5. Having enough money

These also featured as the areas that respondents were most worried they wouldn't have when they grew up. Almost half of the children and young people in our care that responded were worried that they wouldn't have a nice home to live in. The majority of our care leaver respondents were concerned about having a good job or career and good mental health when they grew older.

When asked "What is most important to you in a home?", a majority of respondents selected "a happy and welcoming environment" and "somewhere I feel safe". Children and young people in our care also highlighted access to outside space, free wifi and a calm, organised and structured routine as important qualities in a home. Whereas, care-experienced young people prioritised personal space and proximity to local facilities and public transport networks.

3. What we know about the Children and Young People in our Care

We undertook a review of our care population in 2021 to understand their characteristics and needs and identify changing or emerging trends in the population's profile to inform this commissioning strategy. Our key findings are summarised below and in more detail in Appendices 1 and 2.

We have witnessed a slight increasing trend in Sutton's care population from 230 to 239 from 2015 - 2021. Continuing this trend over the next five years provides a projection of 245 children and young people in our care by 2026.

71% of the children in our care are over 10 years of age. 39% of the children in our care are aged between 10-15 years. This is also the biggest cohort of children commencing care.

There are more males in our care overall. However, females are more dominant in sub-cohorts of our care population. Females make up a larger proportion of the older adolescents (14-17 years) in our care resulting from a higher proportion of females entering care between 12 - 15 years.

The dominant presenting need for children and young people entering our care remains abuse or neglect (41%) followed by acute familial stress (20%), family dysfunction (14%) and absent parenting (14%). When looking at females entering care at around 14 - 15 years of age, acute familial stress and family dysfunction are as prevalent as abuse and neglect as the primary drivers for care.

We have a small number of children and young people in our care (10) with complex needs that receive support from our Children and Young People with Disabilities Service. The majority of this cohort are male (90%) and the primary driver for

placement is the child's disability (80%). Learning difficulties, autism, communication difficulties and behavioural needs feature highly.

In Sutton some children are having or had Liberty Protection Standards applied when entering care. These children are found placements outside of the borough due to lack of facilities locally at high cost. Consequently, children and young people transitioning from secure, or following liberty protection standards being applied, do not have a distinct commissioned pathway as there are no local "step down" options and therefore there is a requirement for improving the pathway.

There are occasions when the care plan requires that children and young people are placed outside of the local authority geographical footprint for safeguarding. Where this occurs the choice to return to Sutton should be available to the child and social worker and a resettlement pathway should also be developed.

The number of care leavers with a named personal advisor has increased quite substantially. As at September 2021, Sutton supported 330 care leavers aged 18-25. 295 of these care-experienced young people had a named personal advisor, equating to a 22% increase since 2018 (241). This increase can be explained by both a legislative change which extended care leavers provision to include young people aged 21 - 25 years who are not in education, and a 30% increase in the number of UASC aged 18-24 supported by Sutton (2018: 82; 2021: 112) since 2018. It is anticipated that the number of care leavers supported by Sutton will increase by a further 5% - 10% over the next five years.

A significant majority (88.5%) of accommodated care leavers aged 18 years and over have low to medium levels of need indicating the need to provide more options for floating support and transitions to independent living.

50% of care leavers aged 18+ with higher levels of need (Levels 1-3) are accommodated in semi-independent provision with 50% in staying put, supported accommodation and floating support placements. This demonstrates that a range of placement types can support young people with higher levels of need.

Unaccompanied asylum seeking young people (UASC) in placements are waiting for leave to remain in the United Kingdom. The number of new UASC entering the borough increased from 13 in 2018 to an average of 21 in the following 3 years, with a spike in 2019. The majority of these young people have lower levels of needs and would benefit from a placement in shared accommodation with floating support.

4. Key Considerations

This 0 - 25 Placement Commissioning Strategy for 2022 - 27 builds on the guiding vision and principles set out in the 2016 Commissioning Strategy, whilst also responding to the changes witnessed and anticipated in our care population and commissioning environment.

Local Strategy

Reflecting the borough's commitment to amalgamate the provision of corporate parenting care and support, this commissioning strategy incorporates the provision of homes, care and support for all children and young people in our care and care-experienced young people from 0 - 25 years.

The placement principles set out in the London Borough of Sutton's 2019 - 2022 Sufficiency Strategy remain in place as set out below.

Placement Principles (Sufficiency Strategy, 2019 - 22)

1. Child is at the centre of the placement process.
2. Well planned placements.
3. Seamless journey for the child.
4. Choice and flexibility in the placement pathway.
5. Outcome focused.
6. Collaborative working with the market.

Wider Influencing Factors

The following key factors will influence the way in which Sutton commissions care placements and accommodation and support for the children and young people in our care over the next five years.

Changes in Practice Guidance

With effect from September 2021, Ofsted views all placements of children and young people aged up to 16 years in unregistered provision as unlawful and requires local authorities to have exhausted all possible placement prior to doing so.

Ofsted have confirmed that they will be introducing a new regulatory and inspection framework for semi-independent accommodation and support for 16 - 17 year olds. Commissioned provision for this age group will need to ensure compliance with these standards and Ofsted registration. The regulatory framework will be published in 2022 with inspections to begin in 2023. The response of the market to this new regulation will not be fully known until the detail is published this year but is expected to have a significant impact on our ability to commission placements for 16 - 17 year olds in our care.

National Social Care Market Review

In March 2022, the Competition and Markets Authority published the findings and recommendations of its market study into Children's Social Care in England, Scotland and Wales. The market study was commissioned to look into widespread concerns with regards the shortage of appropriate placements and rising prices. It found three areas of concern:

1. A lack of placements of the right kind, in the right places, means that children are not consistently getting access to care and accommodation that meets needs;
2. The largest private providers of placements are making materially higher profits, and charging materially higher prices, than expected;
3. Some of the largest private providers are carrying very high levels of debt, creating risk that disorderly failure could disrupt placements

The study made a number of recommendations, which can be summarised into three key areas:

1. To improve commissioning by having some functions performed via collaborative bodies, providing additional national support and supporting local authority initiatives to provide more in-house foster care.
2. To remove barriers to providers creating and maintaining provision, by reviewing regulatory and planning requirements, and supporting the recruitment and retention of care staff and foster carers.
3. To create an effective regime of market oversight and contingency planning to reduce the risk of children experiencing negative effects from providers exiting the market in a disorderly way.

Resourcing Challenges

During COVID, supply challenges in fostering and children's homes have been exacerbated. Against a backdrop of a reduction in foster carer recruitment overall there has also been a reported increase in foster carers leaving, resulting in a net reduction of foster carers nationally. The market has also witnessed a reduction in the availability of experienced and trained carers thus reducing the availability of carers able to take children with complex needs. Bucking this trend in 2021/22 Sutton's internal fostering services managed to recruit 15 carers.

The market has also experienced a shortage in Children's Home Managers and Care Workers, particularly with the specialist skills required for placements of young people with more complex needs. This was compounded during the pandemic when some children's homes were reportedly not accepting newly placed children due to the risk of Covid entering the home. These factors are reducing the capacity of the market to meet the needs of Local Authorities for placements and drives up prices. Greater use of Sutton's excellent training and development offer is a key tool to facilitating investment and growth of provision for, and local to, the borough.

Many of the vacancies reported within internal and independent fostering agencies supply are deemed to be unsuitable to meet the complex needs or age requirements of the children requiring foster homes. This indicates that available foster carers are not being trained or developed quickly enough to meet the diverse placement needs of today's market.

In terms of placement locality and closeness to the borough, over 100 children have been placed in Sutton from other local authorities in each of the last 4 years. In the same period Sutton has placed around 150-170 children in other local authorities. Working with providers should enable an increase of children staying within the geographical footprint of the local authority.

COVID Recovery

The social and economic impact of the pandemic and its associated recovery will impact both demand for services and providers' response.

Children and young people have been less affected than other age groups by Coronavirus itself, but have been disproportionately impacted by the social, educational and economic impacts of the pandemic. Studies have confirmed that many of the known risk factors for poorer outcomes for children and young people have been increased by the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, including, for example, financial hardship and academic pressures. Our commissioned placement provision will need to remain agile to respond to the emerging and changing needs of the children and young people in our care and care leavers as we progress our recovery from COVID.

In addition, the wider changes within the economy as the country recovers from the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, such as increasing inflation, higher utility costs, National Insurance and tax increases, may result in higher service costs.

Pan-London Provision and Regional Initiatives

The Association of London Directors of Children's Services oversees the delivery of Pan-London initiatives. We will continue to engage in these projects.

- Secure Provision: Plans are in place to commission two additional secure provisions, one in North and South London respectively. There is a high demand on secure premises nationally, but the demand for custodial secure is small. The Pan London initiative to develop 2 secure provisions in the London area should support our demand.

- Mother and Baby units
- Pan-London Sufficiency planning.
- Development of four non-secure sites that will act as an alternative to prison provision in London.
- Programme to agree the terminology used across the placement market to ensure consistent understanding and usage.

Boroughs in the region are also open to and approaching Sutton to identify opportunities for future collaborative efforts to improve placement sufficiency and Local Authorities' commissioning influence in the area.

In 2021, London boroughs and partners were successful in securing a major grant from the Department of Levelling up, Housing and Communities for a pan-London programme of work to improve our understanding of outcomes for vulnerable cohorts to better inform service planning and provision, and our capacity to plan and manage the London children's social care placement market. The London Borough of Sutton is leading this pan-London programme which is expected to improve our Pan-London understanding of commercials, market understanding, and placement outcomes to inform our market approach.

5. Placements Vision

The 0 - 25 Placement Commissioning Strategy for 2022 - 2027 continues to support delivery of the London Borough of Sutton’s Corporate Parenting Strategy with the aim:

For our children in care to grow up in a loving community and achieve their full potential.

This strategy supports the London Borough of Sutton’s placement vision, namely that:

Placements for Sutton's children and young people in care will provide them with the right support, care and attention, from the right people, at the right time, all of the time, in order for them to achieve their full potential and aspirations.

This Placement Strategy set out five key principles for placements with a child-centred approach. These are set out in Fig. 1 below.

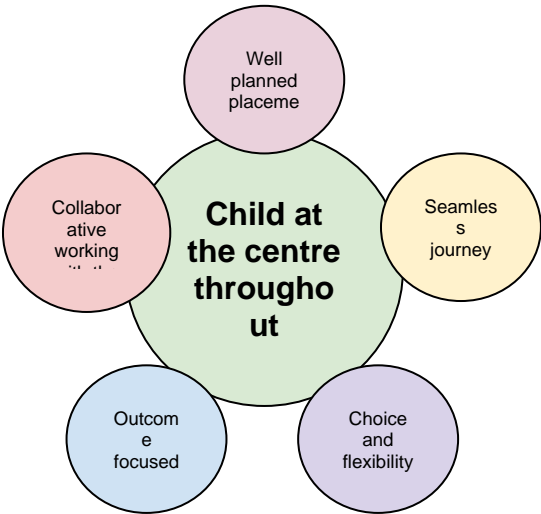


Fig. 1. Placement Principles

Well Planned Placements

Sutton Council will ensure that all placements are well planned, based on robust assessments and rigorously reviewed throughout the lifetime of the placement.

Comprehensive and balanced information will be shared with providers, explaining a child or young person’s positive behaviours, hobbies and interests as well as highlighting any issues and / or risks to be managed to ensure effective matching and ongoing management of the placement. Where appropriate, All About Me summaries, which are developed from review meetings led by or involving the active participation of the child or young person, are an important element of their ongoing life story work and should be shared with the provider.

Seamless Journey

The children and young people in our care deserve and require a stable journey from when they enter care up to and into their transition to independence.

The completion of a successful re-organisation in Children’s Services, and particularly the amalgamation of the children looked after and care leaver teams, and the incorporation of children with disabilities services, facilitates a joined up 0 - 25 pathway. Reflecting the borough’s commitment to join up the provision of corporate parenting care and support, this commissioning strategy incorporates the provision of homes, care and support for all children and young people in our care and care-experienced young people from 0 - 25 years.

Providers will be required to work with Local Authority Officers, agency partners and delivery organisations in support of this 0 - 25 pathway. They will be actively involved in helping to shape the future plans for the child or young person and will be expected to work with other providers to provide a smooth and managed transition between different placements, where this is required due to transition to adulthood or due to changes in needs profile.

Choice and Flexibility

Sutton Council will require a wide range of choice and flexibility in the placement pathway for children and young people.

This strategy builds on the commissioning arrangements already implemented with success since 2016 to provide a more responsive and flexible placement offer to support effective pathway planning for the children and young people in our care.

The commissioning arrangements that will be introduced will not only enable the sourcing of individual placements, but will also enable mini-competitions to engage the provider market in partnership work to strengthen our placement offer in identified areas. We commit to providing advance notice to the market, with comprehensive information sharing, to enable providers to review, plan and respond to procurement exercises.

In addition, we will expand the scale of pilot placement offers which have enjoyed significant success in recent years to increase placement capacity in line with projected demand.

Outcome Focused Placements

Individual Placement Agreements are agreed to reflect the services and outcome needs for the placement of every child or young person in our care. A placement planning meeting is then held to detail the outcome expectations for the child or young person. These placement planning meetings will be informed by the All About Me summary developed with the child or young person. We will require our providers to consistently measure and report on these agreed outcomes.

We will explore the opportunities to introduce measurement of outcomes across our placement, accommodation and support provider performance and quality assurance framework.

Collaborative Working with the Market

Sutton Council is committed to working with providers and agency partners to ensure we collectively deliver our placement vision for the children and young people in our care; indeed this partnership working will be critical to the success of this strategy.

This strategy sets out our commitment to ensure the building blocks required to support partnership working with the market are established and embedded in our commissioning practice.

Our plan to strengthen our contract management framework, includes activity to improve the way in which Sutton Council maintains regular communication with the market and its providers.

Furthermore, the commissioning recommendations in this strategy provide Sutton Council with the mechanisms to establish deeper working relationships with trusted partners to respond to identified gaps in provision and newly emerging needs of the children and young people in our care.

6. Achieving our Vision 2022 - 2027

Vision and Priorities

Our vision for this 2022 - 2027 Placement Commissioning Strategy is to ensure:

Good quality, local provision of placements, accommodation and support informed by our children and young people, which offers choice and makes best use of available resources.

The six key drivers of this Placement Commissioning strategy are:

1. **Choice of Home:** We will continue to access and develop a wide choice of placements, accommodation and support provision with whole system understanding to enable delivery of an agile, responsive and connected care pathway system which meets the changing needs of our children and young people.
2. **Informed:** We will put the voices of children and young people at the heart of our work and the work of our providers.
3. **Increased Local Provision:** We will build on placement and accommodation provision in Sutton whilst also seeking out ways to maximise the value of Sutton's assets and whole system support for our children and young people. This includes developing in-house provision in the absence of any other available resources to meet the needs of our children in care.
4. **Targeted Resource Investment:** We will introduce a provider relationship model with targeted investment of resources in key partner relationships to address identified gaps in placement sufficiency.
5. **Sustained Quality Improvement:** We will continue to improve our contract management framework to lever additional value from our quality assurance

process and continue to improve quality standards and incentivise provider investment in Sutton.

6. **Effective Partner Engagement:** To ensure effective provider engagement and partnership working in social care services to ensure suitability and stability of placements with managed transitions to ensure positive outcomes for children and young people and best use of public funds.

Commissioning Objectives

Our three delivery objectives to support achievement of this vision are:

1. **To Frame:** To maintain the successful commissioning arrangements established to ensure continued access to the market on the most favourable rates achievable whilst ensuring strong outcomes delivery for children and young people.
2. **To Scale:** To build and expand on the successful property and practice pilots undertaken in recent years to further strengthen and expand our commissioned home, accommodation and support offer.
3. **To Innovate:** To undertake targeted partnership projects to develop needs-based market solutions to address known gaps in placement provision for groups of children and young people with specific needs profiles.

Appendix 5 details the key deliverables and associated rationale for each of these commissioning objectives.

Strategy Review and Implementation

The recommendations in this strategy will be implemented by the Children's Social Care Commissioning Team and Children's Services. A programme board is established which will monitor delivery progress and undertake an annual review of this strategy to ensure it remains responsive to changes in the commissioning environment or needs of the children and young people in our care. Regular updates will be provided to the Corporate Parenting Forum to maintain oversight of progress.

Glossary

Term (Acronym)	Definition
Assessment	Undertaken by Social Worker to develop a better understanding of child or young person and their requirements
Brokerage	Negotiations between the Placement Team and a provider to secure a home placement
Care-experienced young people	A care leaver - an adult who has spent time in the care of the London Borough of Sutton and is leaving at the age of 18 years.
Care leaver housing quota	The number of social housing property places which are ring fenced for social services' referrals of young people leaving care.
Children in Care (CIC)	Children deemed to be looked after by a local authority if a court has granted a care order to place the child in care, or a council's children's services department has cared for the child for more than 24 hours.
Deprivation of Liberty (DoLs)	The Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards is the procedure prescribed in law when it is necessary to deprive of their liberty a resident or patient who lacks capacity to consent to their care and treatment in order to keep them safe from harm
Emergency	Standard definitions in the market are being defined within the Pan-London arrangements. For the purpose of this strategy it is taken to mean where a home placement is required but an assessment is yet to be undertaken.
Floating key support	Support for children and young people that is delivered by a central team of provider staff. The level and volume of support is not predetermined in the contract but is flexible to meet the needs of the young person over time.
Independent Fostering Agency (IFA)	An agency that recruits and manages the registration and management of fosters carers independent of Local Authorities
In-house placements	These are foster care of children's home placements provided by internal departments within the London Borough of Sutton.
Key Worker	A named member of staff who provides a defined support package to the young person.
Liberty Protection Standards (LPS)	Liberty Protection Safeguards provide protection for people aged 16 and above who are, or need to be, deprived of their liberty. This is to enable their care or treatment and only for people that lack the capacity to consent to their arrangements. The Liberty

	Protection Safeguards were introduced in the Mental Capacity (Amendment) Act 2019 and replace the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) system.
London Care Services	A brokerage service of fostering agencies and children's homes that is management by the Association of London Directors of Children Services
OFSTED	Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. A non-ministerial department that registers, inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.
Placement	This is a temporary or permanent home for a child or young person brokered by the Local Authority.
Quota housing	Local authority housing allocations which are specified for a particular client group, such as care leavers.
Resettlement Pathway	A managed change of home placement with the view to bring a child or young person in home placement closer to home with a plan of care.
Secure Accommodation	Accommodation which is provided for the purpose of restricting the liberty of children to whom section 25 of the Act (use of accommodation for restricting liberty) applies. For example, an institution where young offenders are kept in custody.
Semi-independent accommodation (SIA)	Accommodation with various levels of support for children in care and care leavers aged 16 and over that enables them to transition to independent living.
"Step down"	Where there is a change in placement due to a decrease in the intensity and interventions of the care plan or move to a more appropriate placement.
"Step up"	Where there is a change in placement due to an increase in the intensity and interventions of the care plan.
Registered Social Landlords	Registered Social Landlords are not for profit, private sector organisations that provide affordable housing.
Staying Put	A specific home placement for a young person who on turning 18 years old and over can stay with their existing foster carers
Supported accommodation	Housing placements with support provided to tenants.
Supported lodgings	Supported Lodgings hosts are approved individuals or families who wish to provide a safe and secure home for care leavers as a stepping stone to independence. By welcoming a young person into their home and providing emotional support, hosts help to prepare them for adult life.

Sutton Housing Partnership (SHP)	SHP is a non-profit organisation, established in April 2006, as an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO), which works in partnership with Sutton Council to provide and manage housing for local residents.
Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and Young People (UASC)	Children and young people who are seeking asylum in the UK but who have been separated from their parents or carers.

Appendices

1. Needs analysis - children and young people in our care
2. Needs analysis - care-experienced young people
3. Children and young people engagement
4. Market engagement summary
5. Delivery Programme

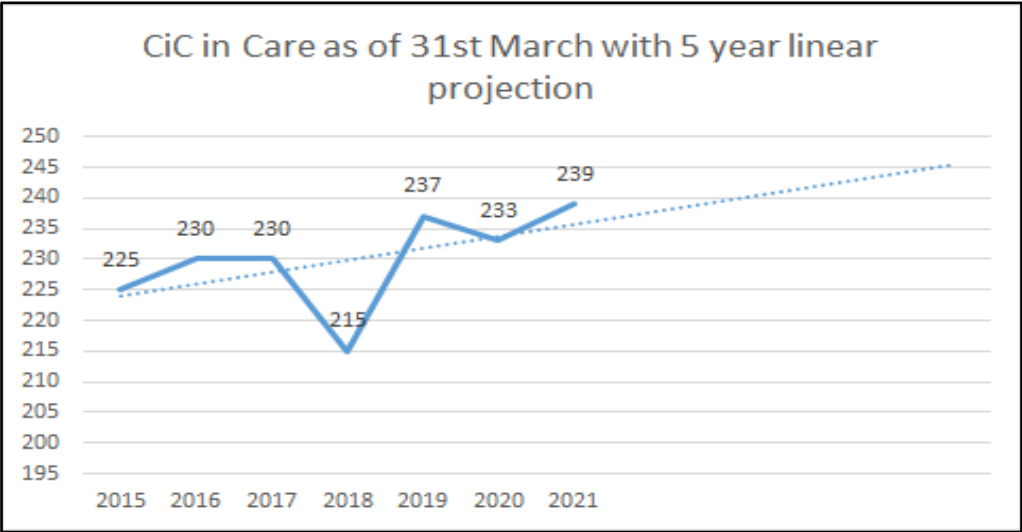
Appendix 1: Needs analysis - children and young people in our care

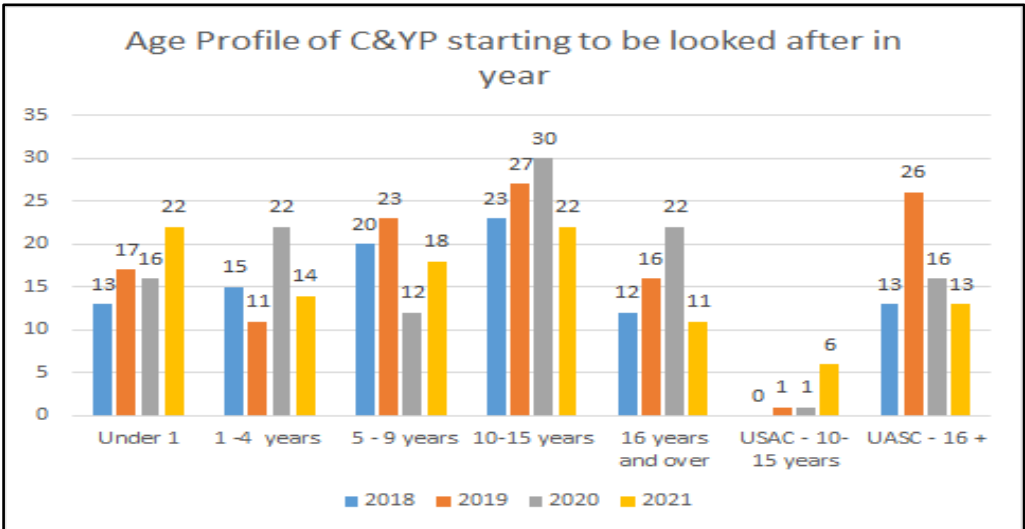
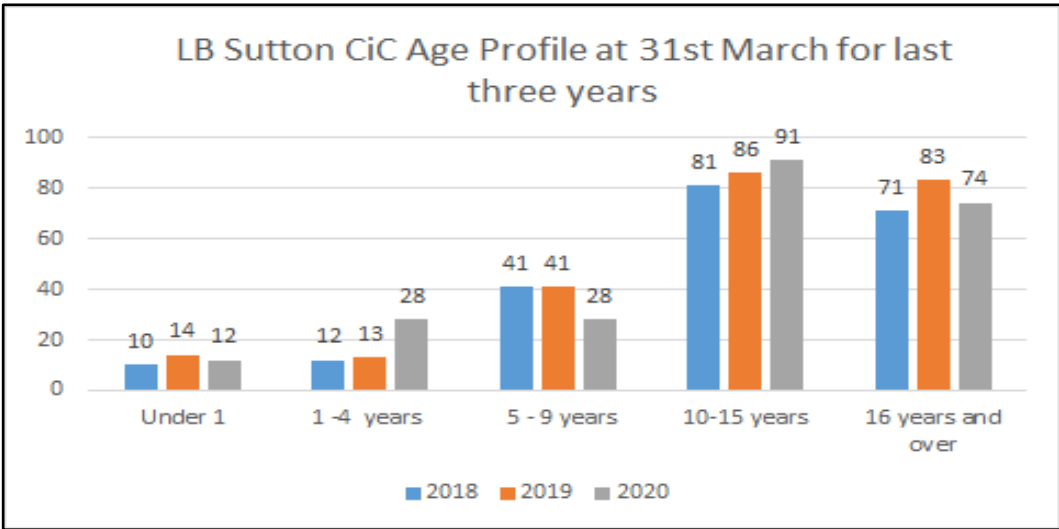
Projected numbers

The number of children and young people in our care is climbing very gradually and averaging between 233 - 237. The impact of COVID arrangements is as yet unclear on these numbers. A linear trend projection for the next five shows an estimated increase of around 1.2 children to around 345 by 2026.

Demographic Profile

71% of the children and young people in our care are over 10 years of age. 39% of Sutton's care population are aged between 10 to 15 years indicating there will be an increase in demand for homes for teenagers and young people aged 16 plus within the next 3 - 5 years. The number of children and young people starting care peaks between 10 - 15 years.





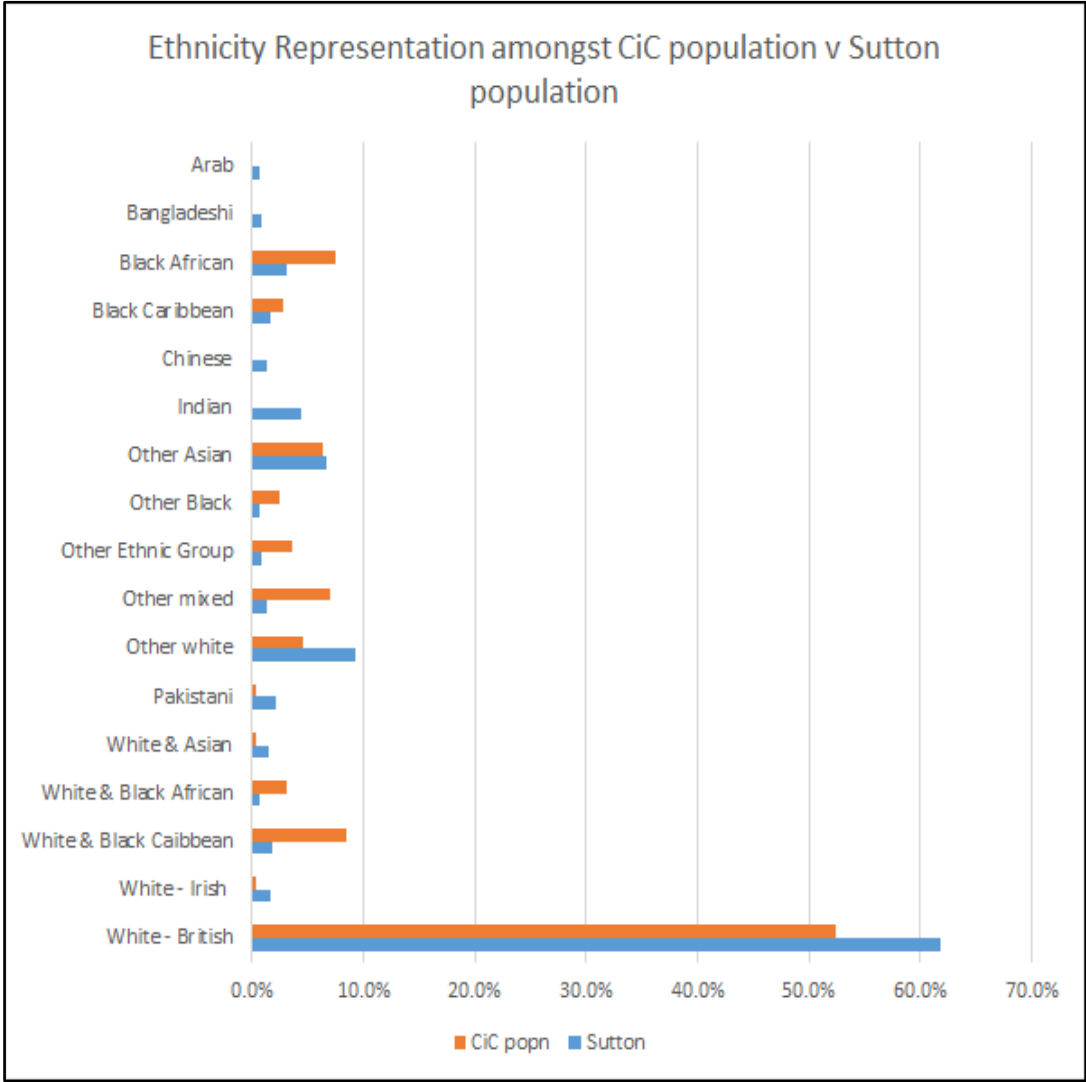
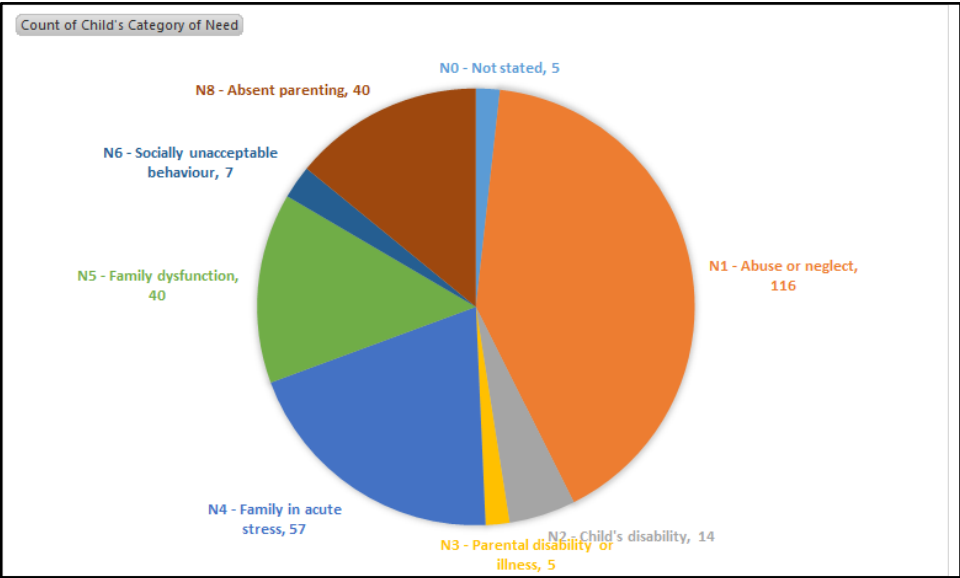
There are a greater proportion of males in our care. The proportion of females however is larger in the group of children and young people aged 14 - 17 years, indicating that a greater percentage of females enter care at an older age.

Of the cohort aged 14 - 15 years, 37% had entered care recently. Placements for young people in later adolescence present greater challenges in achieving progress given the shorter time period in which a young person is in a home placement before moving into independent or care leaver accommodation and support.

The chart adjacent summarises the profile of ethnicity represented in the population of children and young people in our care, as compared with Sutton’s total population. This demonstrates over-representation of some ethnicities within our care cohort, most notably children with white and black caribbean, black african and mixed ethnicities. Whereas, children with white ethnicity, although making up a larger proportion of the population of children and young people in our care, are under-represented when one compares numbers against Sutton’s wider population breakdown.

Presenting Needs

The predominant need necessitating entry into care is “abuse or neglect”, which is almost double that of the next category, “family in acute stress” and almost three times the next category of “family dysfunction”. “Absent parenting” is more relevant to older young people in our care and is primarily used for unaccompanied asylum seeking children.



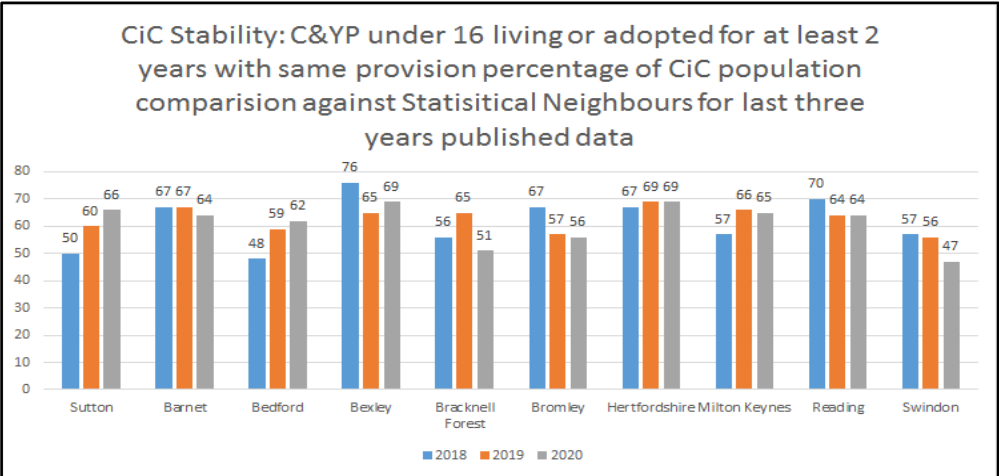
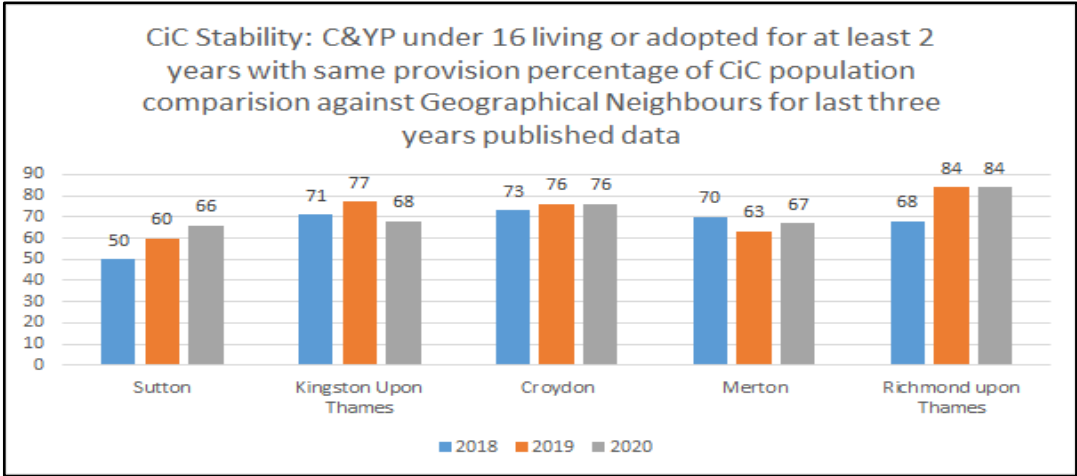
There are variances however in these trends when one considers specific age cohorts. Notably, the proportion of young females entering care in later adolescence due to acute familial stress and family dysfunction is on a par with the proportion entering care due to abuse and neglect.

An in-depth review of the demographic profile and needs of the children and young people in our care supported by the Children with Disabilities team was undertaken in 2021. This highlighted the specific placement needs of this small group (n=10) and market deficits in placement provision with a significant majority (90%) placed outside of the borough due to placement insufficiency, albeit in largely stable placements. The majority of this cohort presented with significant learning or developmental difficulties with autism featuring frequently. Half of the cohort had five or more disabilities recorded highlighting the complexity of need and 50% of the cohort also had personal care needs.

Placement Stability

The number of children and young people in our care in a home placement for two or more years is a key measure of placement stability. Year on year trends of increasing stability have been recorded in recent years demonstrating the positive impact of getting the right home environment for a child or young person. When compared with our geographical

neighbours Sutton is increasing its stability ranking. When compared with local authorities which are statistically similar, Sutton is reaching parity.



Another indicator of stability, children with three or more placements, has witnessed a steady levelling in actual numbers. Where instability exists, this relates to a small cohort of children and young people, notably babies under 1 year, young people requiring Liberty Protection interventions, and young people entering care around 14 - 15 years.

Placement and support services will continue to focus on the improvement of stability indicators for the children and young people in our care.

Placement Sufficiency

There are clear challenges in finding home placements to meet the needs of the following children and young people in our care, which are shared by many Local Authorities. This results in higher placement instability for children and young people and reliance on spot purchase placement arrangements.

- Emergency placement and assessment provision, specifically for older adolescents entering care or experiencing a home placement breakdown.
- Registered residential placements for 16 - 17 year olds. This is particularly relevant to our female care population. 14 (58%) of young people in our care aged 16 - 17 years in semi-independent accommodation placements are female.
- Females aged 14 -17 entering care .
- Registered placements which offer Liberty Protection Safeguarding provision.
- Secure placements.

- Home placements in or local to Sutton for children and young people in our care with disabilities, specifically learning and / or developmental difficulties.

Appendix 2: Needs analysis - care-experienced young people

Projected Numbers

The Leaving Care Team currently provides a service to 377 young people aged 16 - 24 years. Of these, 332 have an allocated support worker and 35 are not in education and do not have an allocated support worker. The break down of these young people is as follows:

- 47 young people are aged 16-17 (Children Looked After)
- 157 are aged 18-20 (Care Leavers)
- 138 are aged 21-24 and have an allocated support worker (Care Leavers)
- 35 are not in education and do not have an allocated support worker (Care Leavers)

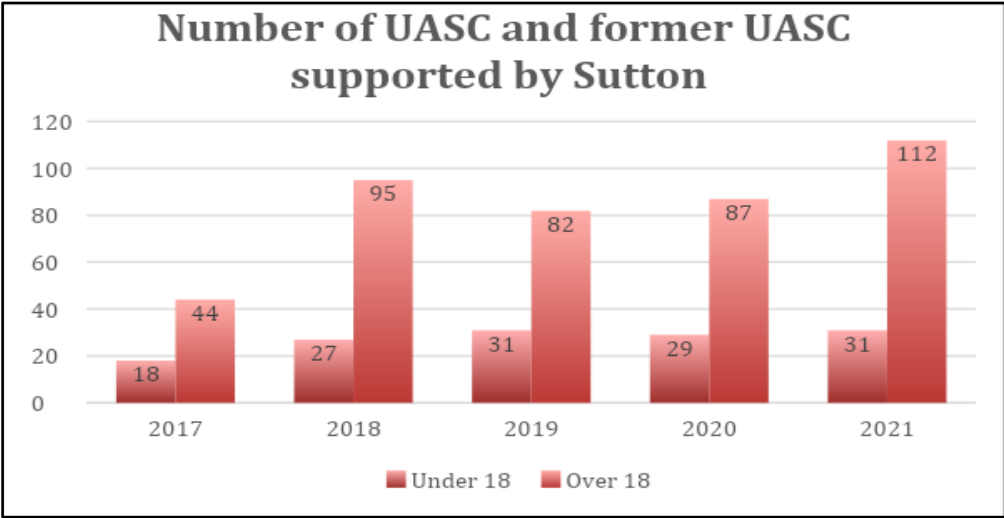
These figures represent a significant increase from the number of young people that were supported in 2018.

In April 2017 the Children and Social Work Act became law and the provision for care leavers was extended to include young people aged 21-25 who are not in education. This resulted in an increase in the numbers of young people being supported over the following 3 years, although most of these young people do not require supported accommodation placements.

Furthermore, since 2018, there has been a 30% increase in the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) being supported by Sutton (from 82 to 112). In 2021, a 23% increase in UASC entering care resulted in an increased number of 16-18 year old UASC requiring placements. This will continue to impact on the number of placements required over the next few years.

In recent years, the number of UASC aged under 18 increased from 2018 and then remained stable at between 27 and 31 young people until 2021. The result is that numbers of UASC aged over 18 increased significantly over time, but the total number of UASC should now become stable at a higher level of approximately 150-160 UASC. This represents a small further increase, but as most UASC that require placements are aged 18-20 this will have a limited impact on the amount of accommodation required for this cohort.

A total of 142 young people aged 16-24 are placed in either 'Staying Put' arrangements with foster families, semi-independent accommodation (SIA), or supported accommodation



contracts. The table below sets out the placement profile of care leavers and unaccompanied asylum seeking young people as at 30 September 2021.

Table: Placement Type Breakdown for 18 years+ Care Leavers / UASC, as at 30 Sept 2021.				
Placement Type	No. of Young People	Placed In LBS	<20 Miles of LBS	20+ Miles From LBS
Semi-independent accommodation- Framework	42 (26 UASC)	4	38	0
Semi-independent accommodation - Off Framework	12 (1 UASC)	0	10	2
Support Accommodation Contract Non-UASC	25 (6 UASC)	25	0	0
Floating Support Contract	12	12	0	0
Staying Put	19	12	7	0
Table: Placement Type Breakdown for 16-17 years Care Leavers / UASC, as at 30 Sept 2021.				
SIA - Framework	16 (8 UASC)	2	13	1
SIA - Off Framework	16	2	10	4
Foster Care	19 UASC	n/a		

Sutton-based placements in supported accommodation or via Staying Put secure significant benefits to young people. As well as being located in the borough, they provide continuity of care and resources that can be targeted more effectively to the needs of the young people. On average, they are also much lower cost than semi-independent placements.

Whilst 2% of care leavers over the age of 18 are placed more than 20 miles from Sutton, over 20% of 16-17 year olds in SIA are placed over 20 miles away. Increasing the number of young people placed in, or close to, Sutton is a key priority of the strategy, including the creation of 16-17 year old accommodation within the borough.

Due to the increases in the number of UASC and the number of 10-17 year olds in our care in Sutton, it is anticipated that the number of 16-24 year olds requiring placements will increase by between 5% and 10% over the next 5 years. The table below provides a projected breakdown by age and UASC of 16 - 24 year olds requiring placements over the term of this strategy. .

Table: Projected breakdown by age / UASC status of 16 - 24 year olds requiring accommodation and support over strategy term.								
Cohort	Age Category	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking young People (UASC)	18 years+	49	53	55	55	55	55	55
	16-17 years	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
Care Leavers (non-UASC)	18 years+	61	63	64	65	65	65	65
	16-17 years	24	26	26	26	26	27	27
Total		142	150	153	154	154	155	155

Demographic Profile

Age

The majority of care leavers (18 years +) in accommodation placements are aged 18-19 with numbers requiring placements reducing over time, as is set out in the table below.

Table: Care Leaver (18 years +) placement type breakdown by year of age as at 30 Sept 2021.

Placement Type / Age	18 years	19 years	20 years	21 - 22 years	23 - 24 years
Semi-independent accommodation (SIA) framework	26	6	7	2	0
SIA - off framework	10	2	0	0	0
Supported accommodation	1	5	5	6	8
Floating support	5	4	0	0	3
Staying put arrangements	8	7	1	0	1
Total	50	24	13	8	12
Percentage	47%	22.5%	12%	7.5%	11%

The table suggests that approximately 50% of the cohort each year is able to move from a placement into an alternative option, including independent living. Whilst this suggests that the pathway to independence works in many cases there are still inconsistencies with 12 young people aged 23-24 years still in placement. A high proportion of these are placed within the supported accommodation contract suggesting that transition to independence for this cohort is taking longer than would be expected.

Securing low cost affordable housing for care leavers is a key part of our 2022-2027 strategy. The annual quota of local authority housing enables a proportion of young people to move towards independence. Despite this, there remain significant challenges for some young people, resulting in a time delay in the transition of young people to independence. Securing affordable social housing for young people will assist in the pathway to independence and will enable step down supported accommodation placements for young people that require them.

The table above also highlights that a significant number of 16 - 17 year olds are accommodated in off framework, semi-independent accommodation provision. The Department for Education has indicated that semi-independent accommodation for 16-17 year olds will be registered by OFSTED from 2023. Securing good quality registered provision will be essential for the future outcomes for this cohort.

Gender

Reflecting the gender profile of both the population of children and young people in our care and unaccompanied asylum seeking young people welcomed to the borough aged 16 years and over, the profile of Sutton's care leaver population aged 18 years and over is predominantly male; this remains true across all accommodation types, as is displayed in the table below, which sets out the accommodation type breakdown for care leavers aged 18 years +.

Table: accommodation type breakdown for care leavers aged 18 years +.						
Placement Type	Age Range	No YP	Male No	Male %	Female No	Fer
Semi-independent accommodation - Framework	18-22	42	29	69%	13	31%
Semi-independent accommodation - Off-Framework	18-19	12	10	83%	2	17%
Supported accommodation	18-24	25	16	64%	9	36%
Floating Support	18-24	12	8	67%	4	33%
Staying put arrangements	18-23	19	14	74%	5	26%
Total	18-24	110	77	70%	33	30%

The gender profile of our care leavers aged 17 years that are not UASC is however different. The majority of non-UASC care leavers in semi-independent accommodation placements aged 17 years are predominantly female, as is displayed in the table below. Furthermore, the majority of these young women were accommodated in off-framework semi-independent accommodation, primarily due to the higher needs profile of this cohort.

Table: Non-UASC care leavers (16-17 years) by gender and accommodation type.

Placement Type	Age Range	No YP	Male No	Male %	Female No	Fem %
Semi-independent accommodation - Framework	16 years	1	1	100%	0	0%
Semi-independent accommodation - Off-Framework		3	2	67%	1	33%
Semi-independent accommodation - Framework	17 years	7	3	43%	4	57%
Semi-independent accommodation - Off-Framework		13	4	31%	9	69%
Total	16-17	24	10	42%	14	58%

Presenting Needs

Needs data was collected from social care Personal Advisors in late 2021 for 70% of the young people in care leaver accommodation and support. The needs of care leavers were assessed on a scale of 1 to 5, with Level 1 = high level and Level 5 = ready for living independently with PA support.

The tables below summarise the needs profile of the current cohort of care leavers resulting from this exercise. Key points of note are as follows:

- A significant majority (88.5%) of accommodated care leavers aged 18 years and over have low to medium levels of need hence the need to provide them with more options for floating support and transitions to independent living.
- 66% (16) of 16 - 17 year old non-UASC care leavers are placed in semi-independent accommodation outside of commissioning framework arrangements. Only 3 of these placements are located in Sutton. This demonstrates that there is an opportunity to expand accommodation and support options for lower need young people, specifically young people aged 16 - 17 years, to support them in their transition to independence whilst securing additional value from Sutton's resources.
- 50% of care leavers aged 18+ with higher levels of need (Levels 1-3) are accommodated in semi-independent provision with 50% in staying put, supported accommodation and floating support placements. This demonstrates that a range of placement types can support young people with higher levels of need, which highlights the potential to reduce the use of framework and spot purchase semi-independent accommodation.

Table: Non-UASC care leavers (16 - 17 years) - YP needs by accommodation type.						
Placement Type	Needs Level 1	Needs Level 2	Needs Level 3	Needs Level 4	Needs Level 5	TOTAL
Semi-independent accommodation - Framework	0	0	1 (100%)	0	0	1
Semi-independent accommodation - Off Framework	1 (8%)	4 (33%)	4 (33%)	2 (17%)	1 (8%)	12
Total	1 (8%)	4 (31%)	5 (38%)	2 (15%)	1 (8%)	13

Table: Care leavers (18 - 24 years) - YP needs by accommodation type.						
Placement Type	Needs Level 1	Needs Level 2	Needs Level 3	Needs Level 4	Needs Level 5	TOTAL
Semi-independent accommodation - Framework	2	2	8	14	5	31
Semi-independent accommodation - Off Framework	0	1	2	2	1	6
Supported accommodation - non-UASC	0	1	2	5	6	14
Supported accommodation - UASC	0	0	0	0	1	1
Floating support	0	2	3	6	0	11
Staying put arrangements	0	1	3	4	5	13
Total	2 (2.5%)	7 (9%)	18 (23.5%)	31 (41%)	18 (24%)	76

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young People (UASC)

The UASC young people in placements are waiting for leave to remain in the United Kingdom. The majority of these young people have lower levels of needs and would benefit from a placement in shared accommodation with floating support.

The number of new UASC entering the borough has increased from 13 in 2018 to an average of 21 in the following 3 years, with a spike in 2019. This resulted from a combination of factors, including the impact of increases in numbers over recent years, the transfer of UASC from Croydon, and referrals from ports of entry and national distribution arrangements. Overall, the number of UASC care leavers in Sutton increased by 23% in 2021.

On September 30 2021, there were 27 UASC aged 16 - 17 years in placements. We can expect these young people to require accommodation of some sort over the next 2 years. The number of 16-17 year old uASC is likely to stay at similar levels over the next 2-3 years. Staying Put may be an option for some of these young people but most will require lower needs supported accommodation. Having a steady supply of floating support shared accommodation for UASC is key to meeting the needs of this group without resorting to higher cost framework and spot purchase placements.

We can expect the number of care leavers requiring placements to increase gradually over the next 2-3 years and then to stabilise at between 55-60 each year. This is subject to the number of new asylum seekers continuing at a rate of approximately 20 per year over the next 3 years. An improvement in the timescale for assessment of asylum claims may allow for asylum to transfer to independent living more quickly, reducing the need for placements.

Appendix 3: Children and young people engagement

Tell Us Home and Support Survey

In early 2022, we asked the children and young people in our care and our care leavers to complete a Tell Us Home and Support Survey. The survey was designed to gauge children and young people's general well being in a number of areas, seek their feedback on their homes and the support provided and determine what was important to them. The survey also featured some of the questions asked by the national Children's Commissioner's Big Ask survey to enable comparison with the wider population, both in Sutton and beyond. Questions were tailored to reflect the children in our care and care leaver audiences.

We were really pleased to receive responses from 72 children and young people, representing 14% of the children and young people in our care, and 12% of our supported care leaver population. We received responses from a broad profile of children and young people in our care and care-experienced young people, as is set out below.

Children in our care (up to 18 years) profile:

- 47% female; 53% male.
- 4% under 13 years; 52% under 16 years; 44% aged 16 - 17 years.
- Broad range of ethnicities.
- 19.4% identified with a disability.
- 61% foster family; 19.4% children's home; 3.2% residential special school (16% preferred not to say).
- 41% live in Sutton; 32% live in London but not Sutton; and 27% live outside of London.

Care-experienced (18 - 25 years) profile:

- 43.6% female; 51.3% male (remainder prefer not to say).
- Broad range of ethnicities.
- 5.4% identified with a disability.
- Broad range of accommodation types (where disclosed) - supported accommodation, semi-independent and private rented.
- 56.5% live in Sutton; 30.4% live outside Sutton but in London; 13% live outside London.

Happiness and Wellbeing

61% (42/69) of respondents said they were "happy" or "very happy" with things in their life now.

The top three things which the greatest number of children and young people in our care cited they were “happy” or “very happy” with were:

- Personal Safety (72%)
- Friendships (70%)
- My Family’s ability to buy things we need (70%)

For care leavers, these were:

- My friendships (74%)
- Personal safety (72%)
- My progress in education and learning (62%)

The top three things which the greatest number of children and young people in our care cited they were “unhappy” or “very unhappy” with were:

- School Life (27%)
- My family life (21%)
- My access to somewhere outside to have fun (21%)

For care leavers, the top five things which young people cited they were “unhappy” or “very unhappy” with were:

- Choice of things to do in my local area (21%)
- Physical health (21%)
- Mental health (18%)
- Accommodation (18%)
- My access to somewhere outside to have fun (18%)

Personal Safety

74% (53/72) of respondents said they “always” felt safe where they were living / staying. This increased to 90% when including those who stated they felt safe “most of the time”.

The positive response rate to this question was significantly different by cohort.

- 88% of the children and young people in our care that responded stated they “always” feel safe where they live, increasing to 97% when including those who reported they felt safe “most of the time”.
- 62% of care leavers responded stating they “always” felt safe, rising to 85% when including those who felt safe “most of the time”.

Carer / Provider Support

49% (35/72) of respondents said they “always” felt well supported or cared for. This increased to 76% (55/72) when including those who stated they felt supported or well cared for “most of the time”.

The positive response rate to this question was significantly different by cohort. 85% of the children and young people in our care that responded stated they felt well cared for “always” (67%) or “most of the time” (18%). 69% of care leavers stated they felt well supported “always” (33%) or “most of the time” (36%).

62% (44/71) of respondents said that staff / carers “always” listened when they were feeling upset or worried. This increased to 80% when including those that said they were listened to “most of the time”.

Future

Respondents were asked to select up to five things (from a list of 18 options) that were most important to them in having a good life, and that they were most worried about not having in the future.

Responses from the children and young people in our care prioritised the following themes as characteristics of a good life in the future which also featured as areas respondents were most worried they wouldn't have when they grow up:

- A nice home to live in - 61% (47% recorded as a top 5 worry for the future)
- Good mental health - 61% (37% recorded as a top 5 worry for the future)
- A good job or career - 55% (43% recorded as a top 5 worry for the future)
- Good friends - 55% (40% recorded as a top 5 worry for the future)
- Having enough money - 55% (40% recorded as a top 5 worry for the future)

Responses from care leavers with an adjusted list of options prioritised the following:

- Good mental health - 69% (58% recorded as a top 5 worry for the future)
- A good job or career - 64% (68.4% recorded as a top 5 worry for the future)
- Enough money to buy the things I need - 59% (55% recorded as a top 5 worry for the future)
- A nice home to live in - 51% (40% recorded as a top 5 worry for the future)
- Good friends - 49% (26% recorded as a top 5 worry for the future)

What makes a good home?

We asked the question “What is most important to you in a home?”. Of 18 options (different for each cohort), the top 6 answers for each cohort were as follows.

For the children and young people in our care:

- Somewhere I feel safe (61%)
- Happy and welcoming home environment (58%)
- Access to outside space (42%)
- Free wifi (42%)
- Calm, organised and structured routines (42%)
- Staying with family, carers or a home that encourages me (39%)

For our care-experienced young people:

- Happy and welcoming environment (52%)
- Being close to local facilities (49%)
- Somewhere I feel safe (46%)
- A space I can decorate and make my own (46%)
- A space where I can be on my own (46%)
- Being close to public transport (44%)

Appendix 4: Market Engagement Summary

Engagement with Post-16 Supported Accommodation Providers

Contacts have been established for all providers - framework, off-framework and new enquiries.

Regular communication is taking place with these providers which is extended to all relevant providers registered on Pro Contract.

Market Engagement Events - December 2021 and May 2022

A market engagement event was held on December 2 2021. The event provided updates on commissioning plans and sought feedback on key elements of our plans.

110 providers were notified directly and notices and provider surveys were sent out via Pro Contract. 48 providers attended the engagement event. All providers sent an update and slides from the event.

37 surveys completed, giving a good indication of the activity and intentions of the providers. Providers want a stronger ongoing partnership to better understand LBS intentions, meet YP needs, and develop collaborative opportunities.

A further engagement event is taking place on May 12 2022. This will focus on the forthcoming block contract and framework tenders. Providers will be given an overview of the tenders and will be able to provide feedback on our commissioning priorities.

A further provider survey will be undertaken to ascertain how providers would want to engage in future tenders and the type of collaborative working relationship that they would like to see in future.

Development of Provider Relationship Model for Post-16 providers

Existing framework and off-framework SIA placements tend to be based on a transactional model. This is characterised by a service offer based on agreed fees with limited scope for negotiation and flexibility over time.

Contracted providers delivering a block of placements have a more trusted model of delivery which is reflected in more intensive contract management, flexible hours of delivery and close working with the Looked after Children and Leaving Care Service.

The new commissioning model seeks to significantly expand the provision of flexible block contract provision whilst reducing reliance on spot purchase placements. This will be underpinned by a close working relationship with contracted providers.

There will be regular development events with providers, collaborative contract monitoring, and a stronger focus on outcomes for young people. The borough will work with trusted providers to develop shared objectives and expertise in a number of practice areas. This will reflect a more equitable relationship with contracted and framework providers.

The framework/DPS will be used to secure placements and carry out mini competitions. Framework providers will be encouraged to develop their offer for the borough and will receive regular communication on network, training, and other development opportunities.

Engagement with Providers for Children in Care

Market engagement with fostering agencies and children homes was drawn from the following areas:

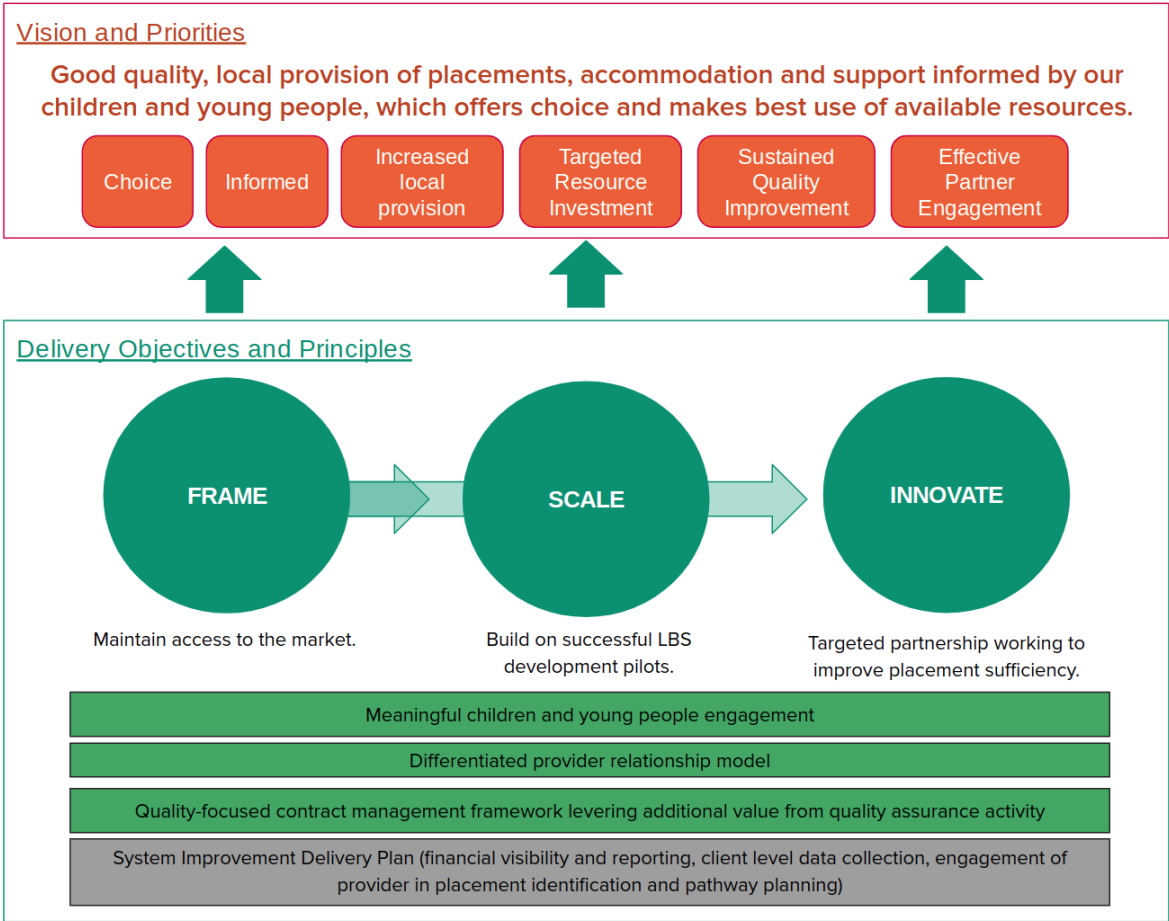
1. Fostering Market providers through questionnaire and one-to-one conversations
2. Children's Homes market providers through questionnaires
3. New Approaches for provisions in Sutton.
4. Review of Social Media
5. Meeting with Market Representatives such as National Association of Fostering Providers
6. Review of Sutton Internal Placement Provision
7. Analysis of issues raised at Sutton's Joint Intelligence Group

Issues raised covered the following areas:

1. Fostering and Children Home markets offer an array of services with various levels of expertise
2. Shortage of Foster carers nationally and recruitment becoming difficult;
3. There is development time to get foster carers to be able to develop to take complex children
4. Timing of referrals after several unsuccessful placements can be barrier to successful matching
5. Discussions within foster carer market re profession versus vocational approach
6. Pockets of innovation being seen around the country, Wirral, Lancashire, based on local solutions not frameworks
7. Providers struggling with multiple local networks that reduce resources and increase risk
8. Fostering can be seen as negative across social media
9. Foster carers in Sutton cannot take Sutton carers due to capacity and training; no process available to adapt.

Appendix 5: Delivery Programme

The figure below depicts the main components of our delivery programme to achieve the vision set out in this 2022 - 2027 placement strategy.



Commissioning Objectives and Deliverables

The deliverables and associated rationale for each commissioning objective are outlined in the tables below.

Objective 1: To Frame - Maintain access to market

Objective 1: To ensure access to and develop a wide choice of placements, accommodation and support provision. This will enable delivery of an agile, responsive and connected care pathway system which meets the changing needs of our children and young people.		
Deliverables		Timeline
1	Exhaust and explore opportunities to support and develop internal accommodation, care and support options, as deemed appropriate, before exploring externally commissioned provision options.	Ongoing
2	Develop a new Sutton Dynamic Purchasing System supplier base for provision of Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements, to include parent and baby provision.	End 2022
3	Develop a new Sutton Dynamic Purchasing System supplier base for provision of children's homes and children's homes with school provision.	End 2022
4	Develop a new Sutton Dynamic Purchasing System supplier base for parent and baby residential provision, to include assessment.	End 2022
5	Continue to use regional arrangements, as the preferred alternative to spot purchase contracting for residential care and IFA placements.	Annual confirmation
6	Develop a new Sutton Dynamic Purchasing System supplier base for care leaver accommodation and support to include semi-independent accommodation and supported lodgings with revised specifications to reflect new statutory regulation and pathways to independent living.	End 2022
7	Work with social housing landlords and providers to remodel the in-borough supported accommodation offer and establish contracts for provision of supported accommodation to care-experienced young people with lower, medium and higher levels of need.	Oct 2022
8	Spot purchase of care home, fostering and semi-independent accommodation placements, as required, to be made on the same terms and conditions as our local provider framework arrangements.	Summer 2022

* All dynamic purchasing system supplier bases established will allow for (1) individual placement contracting, and (2) mini competitions to develop targeted placement market solutions. They provide the potential to add new providers during the lifetime of the arrangement.

Rationale

These recommendations enable the Local Authority to draw upon a pool of providers who have already undergone comprehensive assessment and review.

Sutton's Frameworks for Independent Fostering Agency and Semi-Independent Accommodation provision will expire at the end of December 2022. These Frameworks have proven to support the development of partnership working between providers and the Council's social care and commissioning staff to ensure managed and well planned placements, support delivery of improved outcomes for children and young people, and deliver favourable rates for placements. It is deemed that establishing similar arrangements for the borough's residential care placements would secure similar benefits.

The Council's Placement Team are skilled in the management of placements with a strong understanding of the benefits of different commissioning arrangements. Providing this brokerage team with established provider frameworks and contracting arrangements will ensure placements are made on Sutton Terms and Conditions wherever possible and at the most advantageous rate.

Longer-term framework arrangements support the borough development of contractual relationships with key providers which facilitate a partnership response to changes in need and market opportunities and issues.

Sutton enjoys a wonderful range of allocated settings for care leaver accommodation and support with the opportunity to secure additional properties over the term of this strategy. The large sole provider contract arrangements for supported accommodation into these settings has not enabled delivery of services to cover the broad range of needs that our care leavers have presented.

A remodelled pathway which reflects the different service requirements of our diverse population of care-experienced young people will enable Sutton to respond more effectively to the changing scale and needs profile of our care leaver population. Establishing block contracts with providers to support this pathway will also reduce the borough's reliance on higher cost placements, both on and off framework.

Objective 2: To Scale - Build on successful Sutton's development pilots.

Objective 2: To build and expand on the successful practice and property pilots completed in recent years to optimise the value of London Borough of Sutton's assets and whole system support for the children and young people in our care.		
Deliverables		Timeline
1	Support a continued increase in the number of young people in 'Staying Put' arrangements and develop the option to extend home support via a commissioned supported lodgings offer. Supported lodgings provides a care leaver with low cost rental accommodation in a family home with an allowance provided to the 'host' family.	End Dec 2022
2	Secure and set up additional council-owned sites, with enhanced housing management services and provision of floating key worker support services, to increase the in-borough accommodation and support offer for care-experienced young people with lower needs.	End March 2023
3	Strengthen the community provision of parent and baby assessment and care through provision specific lots in the foster care and residential provision.	End Dec 2022

Rationale

Supporting the borough's policy to expand 'Staying Put' provision by securing 'Supported Lodgings' placements for care leavers will provide affordable accommodation with support whilst reducing pressure on other in-borough accommodation. These options increase the capacity for in-borough placements, whilst also enabling access to local services. They provide more placements in a family home environment to give young people continuity, stability, and supportive pathways to independent living.

Sutton has achieved great success in the commissioning of a floating key work support offer into identified council-owned properties with enhanced housing management. Whilst enabling the borough to develop an in-borough supported accommodation offer in response to the significant increase in the number of supported care leavers, notably since 2018, the service has also evidenced strong outcomes delivery in supporting young people in their transition to independence, and delivered significant savings given the effective use of council assets. Additional council-owned properties have already been identified as suitable settings for the expansion of this service model.

Objective 3: To Innovate - Targeted partnership working to further improve placement sufficiency.

Objective 3: To use trusted partner relationships and provider framework arrangements established in the “Frame” workstream to undertake targeted work to address identified gaps in placement sufficiency.		
Deliverables		Timeline
1	To explore the options for development of an Assessment Hub to support appropriate placement matching for children and young people entering care or pathway planning.	2023
2	To use mini-competitions from provider frameworks to develop outcome focused market solutions to address challenges in placement sufficiency. These may include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Keeping children and young people in the geographical footprint of Sutton. 2. Homes for siblings. 3. Homes for female adolescents entering care. 4. Fostering and children’s homes placements with therapeutic provision within the geographical footprint of Sutton to support young people with mental health needs and learning difficulties. 5. Registered placements which offer liberty protection safeguards as standard placements. 6. Longer term and permanent home solutions. 	2023+
3	Identify properties to establish targeted service provision for in-borough registered semi-independent accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds.	Nov 2022
4	Enhance existing provision for children and young people with disabilities to support prevention of care and suitable care placement, alongside the development of care provision options in the borough for young people with these needs.	2023

Rationale

This workstream seeks to address the known placement sufficiency challenges faced by Sutton and other Local Authorities, as outlined in our needs analysis. This will ensure social care teams can access the right placement for the children and young people in our care at the right time.

The children and young people in our care with a disability and those that require placements with liberty protection safeguards are groups whose needs are particularly difficult to meet with existing home placement provision. We understand that this can only be achieved by working with our partner agencies and market partners to develop needs-based targeted service provision opportunities which makes best use of all available resources within the borough.

Developing targeted contracted provision for 16-17 year olds in-borough will also offer the Local Authority some protection to the anticipated market impact of regulatory changes, improve outcomes for young people and ensure efficient use of council's resources.

- There are limited semi-independent accommodation placement opportunities specifically for 16 - 17 year olds. A large proportion of these placements are made on higher cost framework or spot purchase arrangements.
- In some cases, these children in care can be placed in homes with older care leavers outside of the borough.
- The introduction of Ofsted regulation for these 16-17 year old semi-independent placements in 2023 is an important safeguard and is likely to have a significant impact on market provision and rates.

Commissioning Principles

Our commissioning approach in delivery of these objectives will be underpinned by:

1. Meaningful children and young people's engagement.
2. A differentiated provider relationship model.
3. A quality focused contract management framework.

Children and Young People Engagement

We will ensure the meaningful and supported active engagement of children and young people with experience of care in developing and reviewing services and in decision making. This will ensure services are inclusive, relevant and cost effective and deliver strong outcomes for the children and young people in our care.

The Children in Care Council holds regular events with children in care. These provide an ongoing opportunity to involve young people in our services.

Children's Social Care also organises events, focus groups, and 1:1 sessions. Social workers and personal advisors are a valuable resource in engaging the voice of children and young people in our commissioning processes. This has already been demonstrated in their support for our recent survey for care-experienced children and young people. We intend to repeat an equivalent survey to measure progress and support regular review of our strategic direction. These priorities will be shared with providers so that we can deliver improvements collaboratively with our young people.

The council is committed to responding to the issues raised and building on positive feedback. The survey will influence the development of service specifications and support services.

Young people will be encouraged to influence tender specifications through workshops with focus groups. Where possible, they will participate in the tender evaluation and moderation processes, particularly on submissions relating to engagement of young people and the delivery of positive outcomes.

We will expect providers to engage positively with young people and to empower them to influence the services that they access.

A child-friendly version of this strategy will be produced and published to facilitate broad understanding and engagement in council activity.

Differentiated Provider Relationship Model

We will develop key trusted partner relationships to address market challenges. We will introduce a differentiated provider relationship model to enable and incentivise targeted investment of resources and partnership working with key trusted providers to support continued improvement of placement quality and sufficiency.

A key strength of the previous placement strategy has been the enhanced provider relationships built up by Children's Services and the Placement Team. We are ambitious for Sutton and building on this strength, we recognise that investing time and resources in targeted partnership relationships with key providers will attract further investment to the borough and strengthen the provision we are able to offer the children and young people in our care.

We will build a Sutton provider relationship model for this market place which differentiates our commissioning relationship offer from simple transactional through to trusted strategic partner. We will adapt our commissioning arrangements and council offer to reflect the type of relationship we have with providers, as determined by both the organisational value and financial value of their service contribution.

We will work with colleagues in social care services, finance, procurement, quality and practice and training and development to develop distinct council offers and communicate this to incentivise investment and service development in the borough and to target our commissioning resource in initiatives that will support continued improvement of placement quality and sufficiency.

Contract Management Framework

We will further develop our contract management framework to lever additional value from our quality assurance process and continue to improve quality standards and incentivise provider investment in Sutton. This will facilitate clear provider communication and networking channels. This will focus on a performance framework that is underpinned by a positive partnership with the providers.

We will ensure effective provider engagement and partnership working in operations to ensure suitability and stability of placements with managed transitions to ensure positive outcomes and best use of public funds.

Our contract management will follow these principles:

- Ensure the contracts are understood by all those who will be involved in their management.
- Be clear about accountability, roles and responsibilities.
- Set up and use strong governance arrangements to manage risk and allow strategic oversight.
- Take a differentiated approach across contracts based on risk.
- Manage contracts ensuring a shared focus on business, public service and child outcomes.

- Accept that change will happen and ensure effective contingency and business continuity planning is in place.
- Measure and report on performance and quality assurance frameworks.
- Work for continuous improvement, value for money and capture innovation across the sector.
- Strengthen commercial understanding and approaches, striving to understand supplier behaviour, manage the respective marketplace and ensure transparency of pricing. Established providers will work closely with commissioners on financial projections and outcomes reporting.