



Department
for Education



Children's social care reform

Local Government Association (LGA) Conference

How can we ensure we have the right placements for children with the most complex needs?

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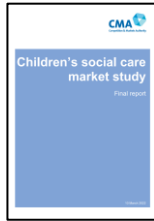
Steve Crocker, Government Advisor on the Markets

Duncan Sharkey, Chief Executive, Somerset County Council

Reforming children's social care is a priority for this Government

The case for reform is well understood

1



The Competition and Markets Authority study into Children's Social Care Placements

Published 10th March 2022

2



The Independent Review of Children's Social Care

Published 23rd May 2022

3



National Review into the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson

Published 26th May 2022

4



Safeguarding Children with Complex Health Needs in residential Settings. Phase 2 report published April 2023

Prevent.

1

Children should remain with their families and be safely prevented from entering the care system, wherever possible.

How will we achieve this?

Greater prioritisation of early intervention, including through the delivery of Families First for Children Pathfinders.

Fix the market.

3

Placements for children in care should be first and foremost homes for young people to live in and we must bring an end to excessive profit making in a sector which supports our most vulnerable children.

How will we achieve this?

Ensuring that foster care and children's homes are both high quality and meet children's needs, through strengthening regulation of the 'market' and ending profiteering.

De-escalate.

2

Where children cannot remain at home and it is in their best interests, we should support children to live with kinship carers or in fostering families, rather than in residential care.

How will we achieve this?

Support local areas to recruit more foster carers and prioritising support to kinship carers so that children can remain within their wider family networks.

Key enablers.

4

We need to invest in the key enablers which underpin the system – including the workforce, better data and information sharing and scale and spread evidence-based programmes which have improved children's outcomes.

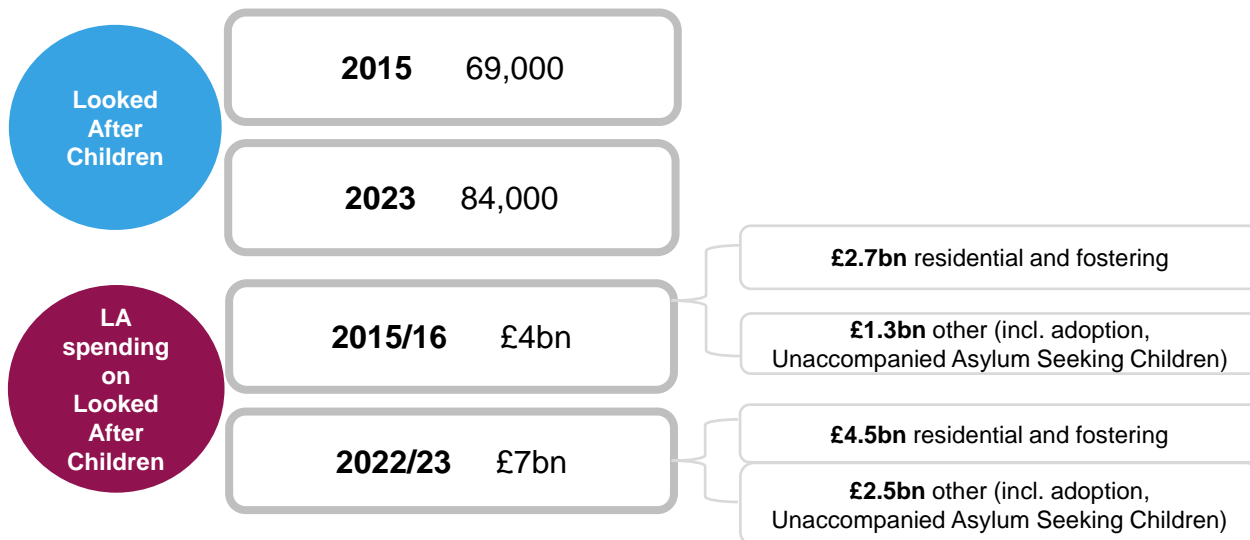
How will we achieve this?

Embedding the **National Framework** for Children's Social Care, delivering sector led improvements, working with and across multiple agencies, and championing the workforce.

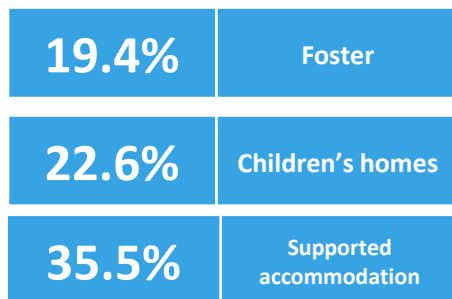
Fixing the looked after children's placement market

The Labour manifesto committed the Government to “strengthening regulation of the children’s social care sector.”

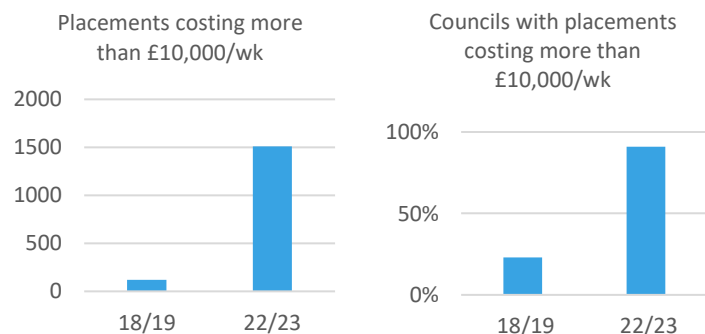
The increase in spending on children in care has disproportionately exceeded the increase in the number of children in care:



The Competition & Markets Authority estimated operating profit margins in large providers 2016-2020



LGA High Cost Placements Survey:



We are taking action to address this through a package of measures including:

- Forthcoming **legislation** to crack down on profiteering by private providers and ensure LAs can deliver safe, loving homes for all children in care.
- **Investing in new foster carers:** Increasing the supply of placements by investing in support for LAs to recruit more foster carers.
- **Regional care co-operative pathfinders:** regional commissioning to improve procurement and deliver value for money of placements.
- **Capital investment** to help LAs/ICBs to develop provision which can better meet the needs of these children.
- **National support** for forecasting, commissioning and market shaping: helping authorities directly to improve forecasting, commission strategically & shape local markets.
- And targeted work across government to support local authorities provide care for children with **the most complex needs**.



Children subject to deprivation of liberty orders

Key findings from 12 months of research at the national deprivation of liberty court

Who are these children...

These are children with **the most complex behavioural and emotional needs**, who have been, or are at risk of being deprived of their liberty to keep them safe.

They may present across various settings, including in inpatient MH wards and Secure settings. They may have similar needs and are often the same children moving through multiple teams and professionals from different parts of the state's system.

Nuffield FJO defined these children as **having multiple, complex needs, often a response to complex and ongoing trauma**. They are **very vulnerable because of a range of overlapping risk factors and needs, primarily related to mental health concerns, self-harming behaviours and risk to others**. The majority have **experienced abuse, neglect, loss or other adverse life experiences**.

Over 50% of these children are placed in unregistered provision which does not meet their needs and is extremely expensive for LAs. They need **multi-agency input and integrated models of care** to ensure that their needs are fully met and that they do not fall into gaps between different services.

... and what do they tell us?

"I was locked in and I wasn't allowed to go out unless I was followed... and not being able to see my family...[it] seemed like hell"; "I've had plenty of assessments from [CAMHS], but every time they just say the waiting list exceeds the time [I'll be staying in the area]". **Child (Aged 17) previously subject to DoL order**

"I was in places all over the country [...] I moved quite frequently ... as in over 20 places in two years [...] There's a lot of uncertainty because you don't know where you're gonna go next, because you don't know what's gonna happen" **Child (Aged 14) previously subject to DoL order**

"If I would have to do it again, I'd change what I'd done so I'd never have to go on one of those. I'd probably kill myself if I had to go on one of those again. It was hard at the beginning. It was hard" **Child (aged 17) formerly subject to DoL order.**

What are some of the key challenges:

- The number of children deprived of their liberty has **increased nationally from around 100 in 2017/18, to over 1300 in 2023/24.**
- A survey of councils by the LGA shows that **the number of children's social care placements costing £10,000 or more per week has risen in five years.** The highest cost placement was £63,000 a week and for **most councils the highest cost is between £9,600 and £32,500.**
- There isn't a clear view of what good looks like, so at local level, systems can often respond to highly complex cases on a case-by-case basis – this is **resource intensive and is leading to disparities in funding, and in the way children are cared for.**
- Local authorities, Integrated Care Boards and the Justice system are **struggling to access the right type of placement,** with the right models of care, and with the right workforce to meet children's needs. The most frequent factors cited as driving the high cost of placements is a **lack of choice in providers, children in care exhibiting challenging behaviours, and complex or significant mental health needs** (LGA survey).
- Services are **not integrated around the needs of the child,** and it is often a risk based rather than relational approach which is taken.

To truly make a difference, we must:

Improve outcomes and care experience for this group of children and young people.

Drive down the number of children at risk of and/or being deprived of liberty via the inherent jurisdiction of the family court.

Reduce system-wide costs - including costs to LAs - of placing children in costly unregistered provision.

Increase the sufficiency of safe and suitable provision for this cohort of children.

Enable improvements in multi-agency working, assessment of need, commissioning, funding and delivery of service provision.

Reduce the number of children on custodial remand and improve outcomes for children transitioning post custody.

Our long-term strategy is to:

Improve outcomes for these children - driving up the standard of care and support they receive.

Increase the amount of provision that can meet the needs of these children and prevent the use of costly, unregistered provision.

Work together, nationally, as well as locally, to ensure we are delivering care which is based on the individual needs of the child, not where they present in the system.

Fixing the looked after children's placement market

We will take a range of actions to **rebalance the market** and **reduce profiteering**, including **strengthening regulation** and working with local government to make sure every child has a safe, loving home.

Short Term

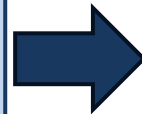
Continue to work with stakeholders and a peer collaborative, bringing together LAs/ICBs to co-design, test and learn.

Testing systemic changes to enable the system to better deliver multi-agency working and assessment of need.

Deliver two regional care cooperative pathfinders to improve commissioning of placements.

Improving foster care sufficiency.

Capital investment to help LAs/ICBs to develop provision which can better meet the needs of these children.



Medium Term

Build a robust **evidence base**, through research and evaluating existing providers to better understand what works well to feed into future pilots.

Consider amends to **primary legislation** to tackle profiteering in the CSC market and to provide a legal route to LAs to place children in provision that provides community-based, jointly commissioned care and which can also provide restrictions, if required to keep children safe.

Continued capital investment to help LAs/ICBs to develop provision which can better meet the needs of these children.



Longer Term

Develop and spread models for **community-based provision and care.**

Improve the **education provision and outcomes** for the cohort.

Introduce and develop **communities of practice**, delivering information for providers and potential providers.

Embedding **joint delivery of services** and pathway planning across systems and at regional level.

Deliver our overarching **strategy to rebalance the market** and reduce profiteering.



What will it look like?

Up to 10 children's homes
High needs fostering
Therapeutic education (new SAT)

10 year contract
Property owned by Somerset
Council

Strategic Partner

Shared risk
Address excessive costs

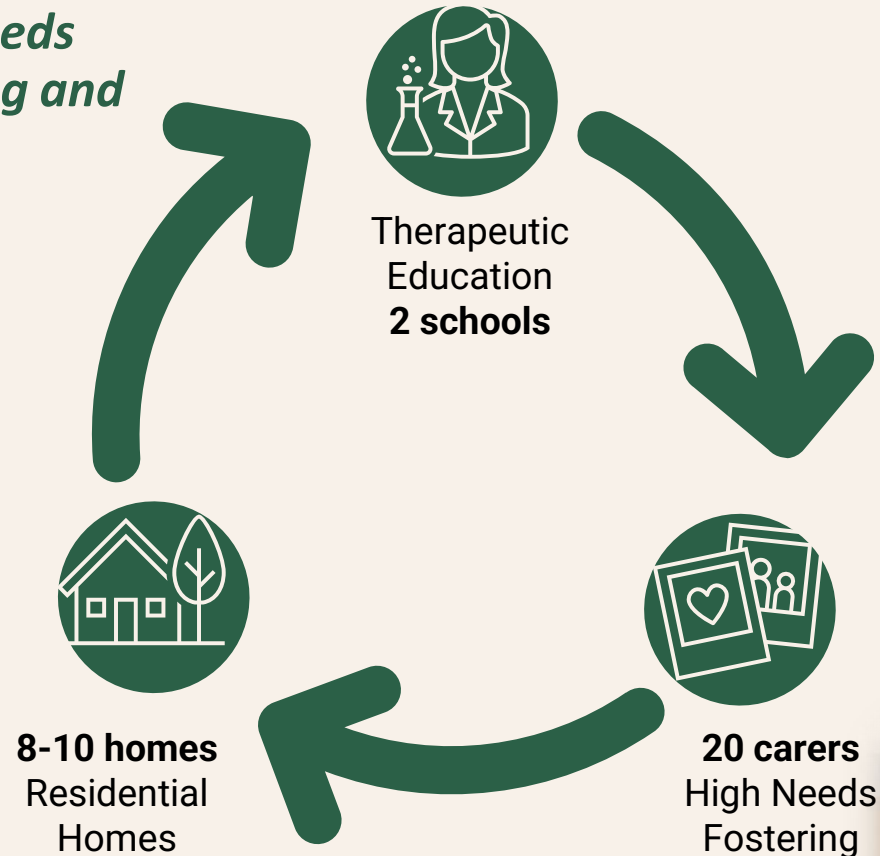
Integrated management with
children's services
Human learning system approach



Homes and Horizons

A Strategic Partnership between SomersetFT, Somerset Council & The Shaw Trust. Supporting children with complex needs including homes, high needs fostering and therapeutic education

All our homes will be 2 or 3 beds. The homes will have constant communication with our school, CAHMS, and our HNF service to ensure that children are in the right place at the right time



Links to other education provisions. Our provision focuses on therapeutic care with the curriculum constructed by specialists. This provision will run for 50 weeks in a year.

We are recruiting High Needs Foster Carers who will be able to link with our homes and school, providing every opportunity to help our YP have a loving home environment





Homes and Horizons

The Journey so far, 2 years in:

7 homes open (8th Opening in early 2025)

14 young people currently in our homes and 3 in foster care. (4 foster carers recruited)

Young people have been supported into adulthood, fostering homes & back to family.

Therapeutic education opened, and 8 out of 10 children who were enrolled in September are attending regularly.

Joint management structure in place, a focus on a human learning approach in a complex system, and joint holding of risk.

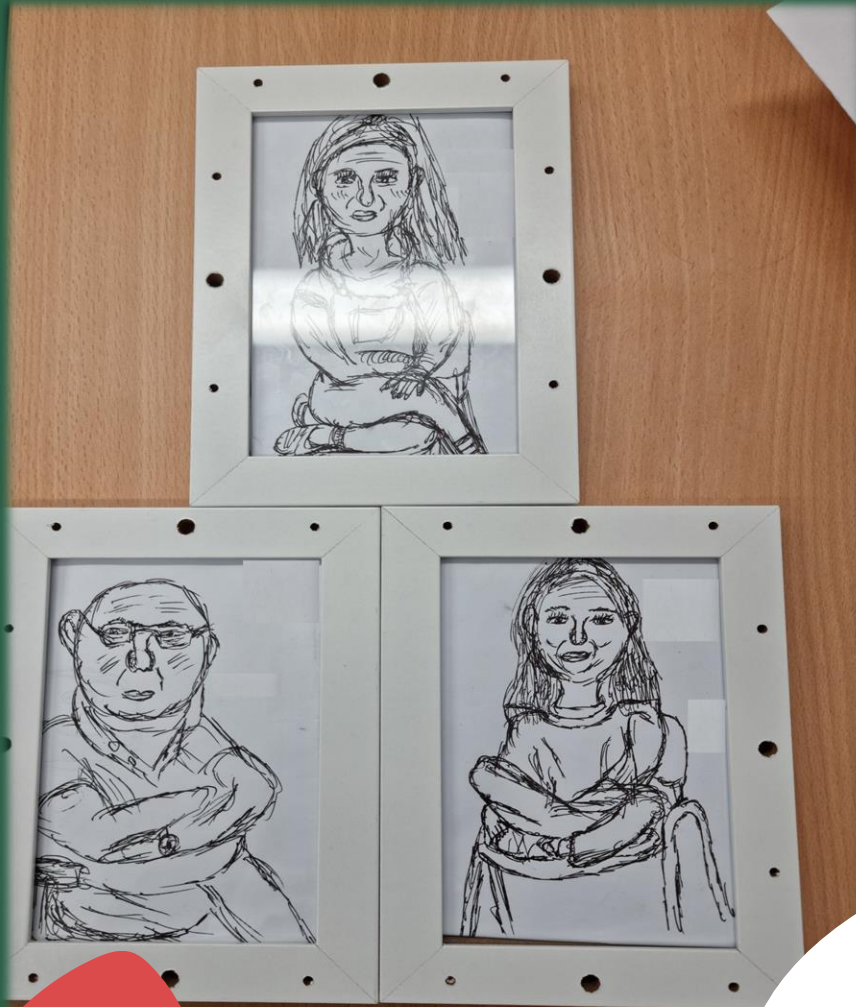




Homes and Horizons

Rose's Experiences

- 4 ½ months on a pediatric ward, and 1 month on CAMHS ward
- Unregulated provision broken down, after second self harm event
- Similar challenges faced within H&H home
- CAMHS joint working, and share risk management
- After 2 months self harm has significantly reduced
- Challenges to support good eating and exercise routines
- Support is being delivered in a Community setting and she sees the H&H home as her home, which she wants to return to.
- Re-integrate into mainstream education has begun in September



Q & A

with **Sophie Langdale, Ailsa Swarbrick, Steve Crocker and
Duncan Sharkey**

Our most vulnerable children

Improving outcomes for children in complex situations with multiple needs

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