Lambeth Looked After Children’s Sufficiency Strategy

Summary Version

2017-2020
INTRODUCTION AND VISION

Children’s Social Care is about changing lives; about protecting children from harm, improving outcomes for vulnerable children and young people, and creating the conditions that enable them to thrive. This Strategy sets out how we will provide sufficient accommodation for the children in our care, that is consistent with their needs and welfare requirements whilst helping us deliver value for money.

PROFILE OF LAMBETH LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

At least 318,000 people live in the London Borough of Lambeth, 62,902 who are under 18 years; a number which if current trends persist, is only expected to grow.

Over the past six years, there has been a relatively consistent number of looked after children in Lambeth. Interestingly, numbers have started declining over the past two years as seen in Figure one, although the reason behind this fall is unclear. Nevertheless, Lambeth still presents higher numbers of looked after children compared to national and London levels (78 in 10,000 children, compared to 60 and 52, respectively in 2015), as presented in Figure two.

A deep dive into the profile of our looked after children has revealed we need a greater accommodation offer for the following groups:

- Children aged over ten years – represents 71% of our total population; an increase on previous years
- Black or Black British – represents 48% of our children in care and is largely comprised of Caribbean and African children or young people (107 and 92, respectively).
- Sibling groups – we know we have difficulties placing additional siblings with children who are already securely placed. There is also a high cost of finding foster carers with sufficient space.

The evidence also points towards a need to improve the life outcomes for care leavers given the rising proportion that are not in education, training, or employment (49%), although this figure has dropped over the past six months. Positively, a new training and employment programme is under development in Lambeth which seeks to address this issue by making better use of the in-house employment and brokerage on offer.

1 Department for Education: Children’s Social Care Reform: A Vision for Change (2016)
2 Statistical neighbours include Hackney, Greenwich, Waltham Forest, Southwark, Islington, Haringey, Hammersmith and Fulham, Enfield, Lewisham, and Croydon.
There is also a need to ensure we have specialist provision on offer to ensure the needs of the following groups are met:

1. **Children at risk of Sexual Exploitation (CSE)**
   Lambeth has seen an increase in number of referrals of CSE since 2013/14, reaching 123 in 2015/16; 86 who were considered at risk or victims of CSE. There is also evidence to suggest being looked after increases the risk of CSE (25 looked after children were at risk in 2015/16). It is recognised that CSE require specialist help and we need to be sure we have a good cohort of providers that can provide these services.

2. **Looked after children displaying offending or anti-social behaviour, and potential gang involvement**
   Challenging behaviour of looked after children is an ongoing issue. Seven percent of children in care were subject to a final warning or reprimand in 2015, which is higher than national and regional levels (5 and 6% respectively). In addition, the percentage of Lambeth’s looked after children identified as having a substance misuse problem (15%) is more than double regional (6%) and triple national (4%) levels.

3. **Children with disabilities including children with associated behavioural difficulties (e.g. Autism)**
   Children with disabilities (CWD) constitute a significant group in the looked after children system who either receive full care as a looked after child or a series of overnight respite placement services\(^4\) (5 children currently receive these services from the council)\(^4\).

4. **Vulnerable looked after children with complex and challenging behavioural needs, particularly mental health and special educational needs**
   Although Lambeth’s rates of annual statutory health assessments are relatively high, the health needs and outcomes are less clear. In addition, there are issues related to the review and completion of the health care plan recommendations for looked after children. Positively, the average emotional and behavioural health scores of our looked after children are better than statistical neighbours and national levels, although it is worth noting only seventy percent of Lambeth’s looked after children had SDQ scores submitted (measure of mental health)\(^5\) in 2015, compared to 82% across London.

   Lambeth generally presents similar levels of looked after children with Education, Health, and Care (EHC) plans\(^6\) (29%) to national and regional levels, which is significantly more than the general population where 2.8% of pupils in England and 3.5% of Lambeth’s pupils have EHC plans. Residential schools are one means of ensuring looked after children with complex needs receive necessary education provision, which are often costly specialist placements.

### 3 REVIEW OF CURRENT CARE PROVISION

The levels of our looked after children over the years have remained relatively constant and similar to statistical neighbours. However, one emerging issue is the number of children who are subject to frequent placement moves. In 2015, the percentage of children with three or more placements was higher than statistical neighbours (13% compared to 8.9%), although near regional levels (11%). We also have a high incidence rate of children five years and under who have been moved three times of more, totalling 14 in 2015/16.

#### 3.1 Edge of Care Services

Safely preventing and reducing the number of children and young people entering the care system is a growing focus; purpose being to protect children from harm and promote wellbeing. This remains an area that warrants

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\(^2\) This figure should be treated with caution as there have been issues with performance management and recording of information; 4 children have a placement through Lambeth’s external block contract; 1 is in a spot purchased placement.

\(^3\) Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is a mandatory assessment local authorities are required to use to assess emotional wellbeing in all children in care between 4 and 16 years. Scores between 0-13 are considered normal, 14-16 borderline, and 17-40 classified as abnormal/of concern.

\(^4\) EHC Plans have now replaced SEN statements.
further attention, evidenced by the comparatively high numbers of children in need and children who are subject of child protection plans (see Figure 3 and 4) and the high numbers of children taken into care on a voluntary basis (i.e. under s20), which represents 35% of all admissions.

Establishing a targeted edge of care service is under development in Lambeth, with initial proposals seeking to provide targeted interventions\(^7\) to families with children that are involved in, or at risk of, violence, child sexual exploitation, or who go missing from home, school, or care; the intention being to reduce the child’s risk of admission to care. If successful, this team can then be scaled up to provide intensive support to other cohorts of young people identified as in need.

3.2 Placement Options and Costs

The council has the opportunity to draw on a host of different placement options depending on the circumstance and need/requirement. As expected, the costs vary depending on the type of placement and complexity of need served. Figure five highlights the degree to which average weekly costs can differ across placements, proving that residential care is more expensive than any other placement option.

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\(^7\) Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) will be piloted as the core intervention used with families. This is an intensive approach that involves agreeing a contract with the family (including their ambitions), helping the family/young person describe what this ambition looks like, and cataloguing progress towards achieving their goals.

\(^8\) Lambeth Children’s Social Care: Average Cost Analysis Mosaic (August 2016)
As presented below in Figure six, the primary placement used is fostering, followed by residential care; the remainder are split across post placement options such as adoption and independent living.

**Figure 6: Levels of Placement Types for Lambeth’s Looked after Children**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Placement Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adoption/SGOs/Parents</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-house Foster Carers</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFA</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Homes</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Residential Schools</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-Independent Living</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents/Relatives</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.2.1 Fostering

Fostering placements for looked after children are provided as alternative accommodation whenever a child or young person is unable to live with their family/friends; these placements are predominantly provided by:

1. In-house Lambeth foster carers
2. Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs)

Roughly 63% of all our looked after children placements are with one of these two service arms (placements first sought with in-house carers) with roughly 38% of all placements through IFAs and a quarter placed with the in-house service. Both Lambeth and IFA carers provide a range of placements depending on the child or young person’s needs.

The overall cost of fostering is approximately £11mil across both in-house (including staff and training) and IFA services.

a) **Lambeth In-House Service**

The council had 119 foster carers in 2016, which represented a small increase in numbers since 2012 (i.e. 93 foster carers). Nevertheless, numbers of placements with Lambeth Foster Carers have been stable over the years, plateauing at about a quarter of all foster placements.

This service costs £2.5mil per annum and consists of carers that are currently looking after 83 children and young people, equating to approximately £580 per child per week; a more cost effective option than use of IFAs who charge on average £865 per child per week.

There are clear advantages to building an in-house fostering service, such as shaping services to meet specific needs and better partnership working. It also presents us with the opportunity to examine our current IFA placements and either reconsider the placement of babies and toddlers placed with independent providers, or recruit a more diverse range of carers to enable better matching and generate greater value for money.

b) **Lambeth Framework Contract: Independent Fostering Agencies**

Since January 2014, Lambeth has administered a preferred list of 20 IFAs through a Framework Agreement that was drawn from the pan-London Care Placement list and which provides a base rate for services, quality assurance, compliance, and consistency in standards. IFAs serve a range of boroughs and in the event there are
no vacancies with providers on our framework or the pan London list, practitioners secure placements off framework to find availability.

The Lambeth Framework agreement is due to expire in December 2017, providing us with an opportunity to review how we meet the accommodation needs of our looked after children and achieve greater value for money. Furthermore, how we can support the development of the in-house fostering service, ensuring each service is complementary and provides placements that meet potential gaps in provision (e.g. sibling groups).

c) Family/Friends (Connected Carers)

The number of children and young people being placed with family or friends (connected carers) has increased. This can be a preferred type of arrangement because evidence suggests outcomes can be better; although this is dependent on the individual circumstance.

3.2.2 Residential Care

Lambeth’s framework contract also provides for residential placements when there is an identified need for such provision. Children in residential placements tend to be older, more challenging, and male, this cohort altogether making up less than 10% of Lambeth’s looked after children population. Residential placement costs tend to be high and is an area that the council could make some in-roads in towards its savings targets. For example, scenario modelling exploring the savings to be made by shifting 20 children from residential care to IFAs, would enable the council to save approximately £2.5 million per year.

a) Residential Providers: Framework Placements

There are 32 providers in the pan-London care placement list, 12 which are in Lambeth’s framework contract who together provide a variety of residential services for 29 children and young people at roughly £2,680 per child per week. Predictably, the costs are higher for placements that are made using neither the Lambeth nor pan London framework contracts (see Figure 7) which consisted of 35 children and young people as of December 2015, reaching an average weekly cost of £3,100.

Lambeth is committed to only using providers that are judged as good or outstanding by Ofsted and there is a recognised dearth of local borough residential service provision. Numbers of children that have been placed more than 20 miles away have remained relatively consistent at 18% of all placements, with the vast majority requiring specialist provision that is not available locally.

Figure 7: Comparative Weekly Costs of Lambeth Placements

In Lambeth the majority of foster placements (near 99%) are with the in-house service or with providers from the IFA framework or from the pan-London Care Services List. The picture is less favourable for residential placements where 30% of placements are made off framework (see Figure 11).
b) **Off-Framework Providers**

The brokerage team first try to find suitable accommodation using either the in-house foster service, followed by the Lambeth IFA and residential framework contracts and the pan-London Care Services List. If a placement cannot be found, ‘spot purchases’ are carried out where emergency placements are sourced outside the usual channels. These can be typically high cost services, which can pose a higher risk than framework contract purchases that are quality assured with clear pricing bands.

c) **Residential Schools**

The council needs to be able to provide specialist placements to support children and young people with special education/complex learning needs such as Autism or Pathological Demand Avoidance Syndrome (PDA). In Lambeth, these placements are decided by a tripartite panel comprising of health, education, and social care who together review the child’s needs and placement requirements. Four looked after children with special education needs (SEN) are currently placed in residential schools, which are spot purchased and located outside the borough.

d) **Overnight Respite (Short-Break) Services**

Children with disabilities (CWD) by and large remain at home with their families and are supported by comprehensive packages of care provided by health, education, and social care (e.g. residential schools). Included in these services, is overnight respite care for CWD which comprises of a series of pre-planned short term placements for a particular child at an overall cost of roughly £42,000 per annum. The service currently provides placements for five CWD under contract with a specialist residential provider, due to expire in 2016.

e) **Secure Accommodation**

There are two routes by which children can become looked after and placed in secure accommodation:

1. Child or young person meets the ‘welfare’ criteria as set out in section 25 of the Children Act (1989)\(^9\)
2. Child is remanded into local authority care by the courts (although this does not necessarily lead to accommodation in secure homes; only those sentenced to youth detention accommodation).\(^10\)

Lambeth typically has very low numbers of children placed in secure accommodation on welfare grounds (e.g. in 2015 we had no children in secure homes). There are more children remanded into our care by the courts; 2015 saw eight young people in remand care and on 31 March 2016, nine young people were remanded (although 15 over the course of the year).

3.2.3 **Post-Placement/Permanency Options**

a) **Adoption and Special Guardianship Orders**

Seven percent of all children ceased to be looked after because they were adopted in Lambeth, which is less than half the national average (17%) and lower than statistical neighbours (9%). There has however, been an increase in special guardianship orders as seen in Figure 9, which has soared in the past five years, rising from 6% of children in 2011 to 10.5% in 2015; similar to regional and national levels.

Adoption performance was an area that was judged inadequate according to the 2015 Ofsted judgement; particularly in relation to improving the council’s adoption procedures to ensure children who required adoption received timely services. This finding is supported by evidence highlighting the difference in average time between the local authority receiving authority to place a child and finding a suitable match (see Figure 8). Positively, since this judgement operational practices have improved, with the average time between a

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\(^9\) Welfare criteria specifies the child has a history of absconding and is likely to abscond from any other accommodation; upon absconding he/she may suffer significant harm; or if kept in other accommodation is likely to injure themselves or others.

\(^10\) Following the introduction of the Legal Aid, Sentencing, and Punishment of Offenders (LASPO) Act 2012 which gave remanded young people ‘looked after’ status.
placement order being granted and a child moving in with their adoptive family at 444 days on average; a substantial improvement upon the previous year’s performance.

Figure 8: Average Time (Days) between Placement Order being Granted and Finding Suitable Match

b) ‘Staying Put’ Arrangements

Staying Put arrangements were recently introduced, which gives young people over 18 years the option to remain in foster care until their 21st birthday. 20 young people in Lambeth are currently in ‘staying put’ arrangements at a total cost of roughly £12,000 per annum per child (this is partly paid for through a government grant).

c) Transition to Independent Living

In order to prepare young people for independent living, the majority of care leavers spend a period of time in semi-independent/supported accommodation. In Lambeth this accommodation is commissioned through two contract arrangements:

- The Young Persons’ Pathway Supported Housing
- The Semi-Independent Living Framework

The Young Persons’ Pathway Supported Housing

Young people are referred into supported housing via Lambeth Housing and 2016 saw 31 care leavers successfully accommodated. This is a more affordable option as the Council pays for the support element of the service only, and rent and other housing costs are claimed back through Housing Benefit.

The Semi-Independent Living Framework

Referrals to the semi-independent living framework is via Social Care with accommodation spot purchased as needed from providers in the contract, although 25% of placements are with providers from neither supported housing or semi-independent living frameworks and can be extremely costly arrangements. More than 80 young people are currently placed in semi-independent living, of which 30 are placed off the framework contract.

As Figure 9 demonstrates, supported accommodation is significantly less expensive than semi-independent living, and both options substantially less costly than placements made outside of either arrangement.
We know we need to improve our quality assurance mechanisms and ensure information is routinely captured and shared at all levels across our entire placement offer. We already collect a range of performance information, however it is clear there are still improvements to be made, including:

- using informal performance information to influence service design – e.g. ensuring foster carers who have a history of returning or refusing to continue to care for a looked after child are no longer used
- establishing quality assurance systems for placements made outside the framework contracts – particularly for residential placements where 28% of placements are spot purchased.
- involving the Special Education Needs team and Virtual School in the quality assurance of commissioned independent education provision

Statutory monitoring requirements for fostering and residential care are specified by Regulation 35 of the Fostering Services Regulations (2011) and Regulation 44 (previously Regulation 33) of the Children Homes Regulations (2015) which require the following:

- Regulation 35 requires monitoring reports to be provided to Ofsted on an annual basis and are to be informed by three monthly written reports submitted to the local authority or Executive/Trust\(^{11}\)
- Regulation 44 requires an independent person visit the residential home on a monthly basis to carry out a physical inspection, after which a report is produced and issued to Ofsted.

Providers submit these reports to Ofsted on top of different local authority reporting requirements which can differ between local authorities. The range of different templates, reporting structures, and timelines continue to be a bone of contention with providers and is an area that could be streamlined and standardised.

### 3.4 Governance

Establishing strong yet proportionate governance arrangements that involve and take in the views of partners, practitioners, and the children we look after is key to an effective children’s social care system. We have begun to lay the foundations for strengthened accountability through the Children’s Improvement Programme and the emerging corporate parenting agenda. Yet there is still more to do.

As depicted in Figure ten, it is proposed that the responsibility for driving and monitoring the implementation of this strategy rests with the Looked After Children Programme Board, consisting of representatives from across the council as well as partner agencies. It is proposed monthly board meetings are convened and a Project Manager assigned to provide updates on the action plan, raise any risks to strategy implementation, and act as the critical link between the Board and other council services. Updates would be provided to the Corporate Parenting Board as required.

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\(^{11}\) Ofsted; Conducting Inspections of Local Authority Fostering Services and Independent Fostering Agencies (2012)
Figure 10: Proposed Governance Arrangements for Sufficiency Strategy
4 SUFFICIENCY DUTY

As a council, we have significant responsibilities to our population of looked after children and care leavers.

Our current looked after population represents roughly 0.7% of our Lambeth children and young people, which is projected to decrease in the next five years; although our cohort of children aged ten years and over are predicted to grow. The proportion of looked after children with our in-house foster team are steadily projected to increase, mirrored by a sharp fall in independent fostering agency placements (see Appendix one for details).

4.1 Summary of Needs

Summarised below are some of the challenges we face in planning for the future, based on the profile of our looked after children, the demand for accommodation, and the emerging issues affecting their outcomes.

4.1.1 Difficulty finding Accommodation to meet Demand at Right Time

We have experienced difficulties finding the right placement at the right time, particularly for children over 13 years, sibling groups, and minority ethnic groups. We also know we need more options for residential accommodation as well as more local placement options which have the potential to relieve budget pressures and help looked after children retain or re-establish familial relationships.

4.1.2 Need More Options for Specialist Placement Provision

We need a range of specialist providers able to support children with complex and challenging behavioural needs, such as children at risk of sexual exploitation (CSE)\(^{12}\), children and young people who have disabilities or complex health or educational needs (e.g. EHC plans), and young people with challenging behavioural issues (e.g. young people involved with or on the periphery of gangs and gang crime).

Increasing our specialist provider base will include a focus on child protection and the operational practices adopted by providers', regular referrals to the Children Looked After Mental Health Service for children with SDQ scores judged as ‘of concern’, and educational provision. We will grow the numbers of foster carers that are approved and trained to look after young people at risk of offending; who are able to provide emotional and practical support.

4.1.3 High Cost Service and Continued Spot Purchases of Placements

We need to be better at consistently challenging costs of high cost placements, starting with reducing the number of ‘spot purchased’ placements. We also need to improve our relationship with the provider market; adopt a stronger enabling position that makes it clear what our expectations and needs are in terms of meeting the future demand of our looked after children.

4.1.4 Comparatively High Numbers of Children in Need

Lambeth children who are assessed as ‘in need’ or who are the subject of Child Protection Plans (CPP) are higher than national and regional levels, and CPP rates seem to be on the rise. In addition, 35% of children are brought into care on a voluntary basis. Taken with the rising cost of placements, the case for developing early interventions to help children and young people at risk of entering care is clear. One particular group which could benefit are families that have children involved in, or at risk of, gang violence.\(^{13}\) These young people are often referred to children’s social care and intensive family therapy could be an effective alternative to care.

4.1.5 Placement Instability amongst Some Looked After Children

Children who are subject to frequent placement moves are less able to form positive attachments with carers which makes them more vulnerable to unsafe relationships with other adults or peers. It can also lead to

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\(^{12}\) Anecdotal reports suggest one of our residential specialist providers is now oversubscribed with looked after children at risk of CSE.

\(^{13}\) Youth violence is particularly prevalent in Lambeth and regularly involves sexual exploitation, gangs, and knife and gun crime.
educational disruptions and difficulties as a move in placement may require a new school. Lambeth has a high level of placement moves compared to statistical neighbours (13% are moved three or more times compared to 8.9%) and presents clear demographics trends in terms of the groups affected; specifically young people aged 15 years of Caribbean ethnicity. There are also growing concerns about the incidence rate of children five years and under who have been moved three times of more.

4.1.6 Delays to Adoptive Placements

Securing adoptive placements or other permanency placements becomes more challenging the older the child is, particularly if there is a history of neglect/abuse or if there are birth children in the adopted family. This is not helped by the significant delays children experience in being placed for adoption. This can be explained by the referral process to the Adoptions Team which appears to take place once the placement order has been granted, rather than once care proceedings are instigated, creating unnecessary delay as the Team need time to find and match suitable families (see Figure 8).

4.1.7 Other Priority Needs

A quick roundup of the remaining priority needs that fall outside the scope of this sufficiency strategy have been outlined below. These will be addressed in other strategies currently under development.

Inadequate Preparation for Independent Living

Our care leavers do not seem to be experiencing the level of support they need, evidenced in the first instance by the growing proportion of care leavers that are not in employment, education, or training. This, coupled with the need for better quality and more up-to-date pathway plans will be addressed through the preparation for independence strategy.

Poor Performance Information

There is a rapidly growing awareness of the gaps in our performance information, such as:

- No means of capturing information on specific looked after groups (e.g. siblings, parent and child)
- Lack of clarity regarding the outcomes of care leavers exiting semi-independent accommodation
- Limited understanding of overall health needs, diagnoses, and outcomes of looked after children
- Irregularities on recording of information, particularly in relation to children who go missing from care, categorising of needs (e.g. reason for becoming looked after), and insufficient analysis to address risks
- Different performance management systems used in some areas (e.g. youth offending service, housing)
- Inconsistent methodology used within the council, making it difficult to ensure consistency in reporting
- Difficulty tracking individual children because of the way data is collated and categorised.

Insufficient Communication and Engagement of Services

Evidence points to a clear delay in notifying teams of looked after children that have entered the system and limited updates regarding potential moves, a particular issue for the Adoptions Team and Special Education Needs Team. This can result in inappropriate placements that do not meet the looked after child’s educational needs. Finally we also need to be better at notifying other local authorities that of high risk placements in their borough.

4.2 What we will do

4.2.1 Increase In-House Fostering Provision

Expanding the in-house service is a priority as a means of meeting the future demand for accommodation and generating savings. Lambeth will implement a two-pronged approach to growing the in-house service, consisting of a recruitment drive for new carers and the development of existing carers, focusing on:
- Older children – in particular teenage boys over 13 years;
- Black minority ethnic groups – almost half (46%) of children in care are Black or Black British;
- Sibling groups – aiming to keep siblings together and find foster carers with sufficient space; and
- Young people with complex needs or challenging behaviours and support for young mothers and babies.

We will also revise our existing fostering payments scheme to ensure our expectations are clearly laid out and that our competency payments are linked to skills and skill development, leading to more specialist carers (e.g. able to provide short-breaks services). Part of this development will include training on children’s social development, responding to challenging behaviour through restorative means, and encouraging participation in the Fostering Changes programme which develops parenting approaches and is offered by CLAMHS. We are also committed to increasing the pool of long-term foster families.

4.2.2 Develop Specialist Provision and Capability

To help meet our specialist placement requirements, in future we will require all our providers to demonstrate their systems and capacity for:

- following up on children that go missing from care
- therapeutic care targeting children and young people at high risk of CSE
- restorative approaches for challenging behaviour, such as counselling or personalised support
- completing SDQs and assessing when referrals to specialist services such as CLAMHS are needed
- managing the completion/implementation of health care plans

These requirements will feed in to any future tender, service level expectations, or individual care agreements. We will also explore the potential to recruit and train care leavers or young adults who have experience of the care system to act as peer mentors and positive role models for our children in care.

We will also review our relationships with specialist service partners to ensure the individual needs of looked after children are met and that specialist support is accessible when needed, starting with a review of the way we work with, and refer to, the Children Looked After Mental Health Service (CLAMHS) and the Virtual School.

Work is also currently underway to develop a provider framework agreement that brings together preferred residential schools and ensures each are retained on a standardised contract for use as needed. These schools are required for children with complex health, education, or behaviour needs, and aim to provide a higher level of intensive support and education and independence skills.

4.2.3 Improve the way we Commission Services to Generate Greater Value for Money

It is clear we need to improve our relationship with the provider market. The first step is to make sure we have standardised agreements in place for all providers that are accommodating our looked after children. Secondly, we need to look to the future and restructure the way we engage with the market.

The future of our fostering, residential, and semi-independent Framework contracts will be a major priority in 2016/17 and we are already exploring the best means of commissioning the priority services we need, such as accommodation for older children, sibling groups, as well as more Lambeth based options to help children sustain familial relationships and education.

This heralds the need for a market position statement which will help us generate new opportunities for volume discounts and help us plan and prioritise our investment. It will also set the scene for our providers by identifying possible future market opportunities and describe our provider requirements.

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*IFA and residential contracts expire in December 2017; semi-independent living contract in early 2017.*
We can also see some placements are more expensive than others. This knowledge could warrant the consideration of a clear step-down procedure that enables young people to step down from residential to foster care, and eventually from fostering to back home or an alternative placement.

Nevertheless, it is the emergency/urgent placements that are the most costly, difficult to find, and often lead to spot purchasing arrangements. As such, developing quick response options for emergencies is an immediate priority. We will prepare an options appraisal exploring how we can source temporary local provision for short-term emergency placements, including scoping options for developing an emergency foster placement scheme within the new Lambeth Foster Care Team as well as build capacity in our existing local supplier market.

4.2.4 Establish an Edge of Care Service

There is a case for establishing an edge of care service that is tasked with supporting families to keep the child in the home, where it is in the child’s best interests. This approach can reduce the high numbers of S20 placements and lower the rates of children in need or children that are subject to child protection plans.

We are currently working on establishing an operational edge of care service that prototypes a new way of working with families with children at risk of, or involved in, gangs or youth violence. This new multi-disciplinary team will support families that would otherwise resort to statutory interventions, such as social care. It will also have the potential to be scaled up to reach other groups (e.g. children with disabilities).

4.2.5 Strengthen Permanency and Adoptive Placement Arrangements

We know we need to improve our permanency planning; prevent delays in moving children to permanent homes. That our children experience delays and can be in temporary placements for too long is undeniable.

We will embed permanence in our systems, starting with the transition between front line services and the Adoptions Team. We will ensure early referrals to the Adoptions Team take place at the beginning of care proceedings to ensure a suitable adoptive family can be found in time, particularly for children under five. We will establish annual reviews of adoptive allowances to ensure payments end when the child is of age or is no longer in the home. And early engagement with the Special Education Needs Team will also feature in our plans to ensure we understand, provide, and monitor the educational needs of looked after children. We will also instil a greater focus on placement stability by tracking and reviewing children (particularly those aged under five) that have been moved, and regularly assessing if their placement is suitable.

4.2.6 Streamline our Quality Assurance and Governance Processes

There is potential to streamline our performance monitoring systems with Ofsted’s statutory reporting requirements, to create a standardised system of reporting that does not create an additional burden on our providers. As such, we will review our existing templates and performance monitoring systems to ensure consistency with Ofsted and where necessary, we will also enhance templates to ensure Lambeth-specific issues are picked up. This reporting structure will mirror the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IFA</th>
<th>Residential</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reporting Type and Frequency</td>
<td>Reg 35:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Quarterly reports to Lambeth</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Annual reports to Ofsted and copied to Lambeth</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Ofsted inspections once every 3 years</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lambeth-specific:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Annual performance reviews (detailed written reports and joint site visits and meetings)</td>
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<td>Reg 44:</td>
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<td>- Monthly independent visits to residential homes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Written report of findings submitted to Ofsted and copied to Lambeth four weeks after visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lambeth-specific:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Annual performance reviews (detailed written reports and joint site visits and meetings)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is also a need to better coordinate education (e.g. Virtual School) and social care in the quality assurance process and efforts will be made to strengthen the interrelationship.
This will also include strengthened internal governance structures, including:

- Redefining and communicating the functions of panels
- Improving the quality of referrals to ensure they are submitted with the provider market in mind
- Carrying out in-depth retrospective reviews of high cost placements
- Establishing a Programme Board to drive the delivery of this strategy and ensure savings are achieved
- Presenting annual reports to members/senior executive that describe how we are fulfilling our statutory duties to its looked after children and care leavers.

4.2.7 Ancillary Proposals

Although outside the scope of this sufficiency strategy, there are a range of supplementary proposals that will be explored that affect the life outcomes of looked after children and are indirectly related to the need to provide sufficient placements. These are briefly summarised below on the understanding that each will be explored further as part of the other strategies currently under development.

Strengthen Support for Care Leavers in their Transition to Independence

Work to improve the current placement pathway for care leavers has already begun; the two Housing and Social Care referral arms are being brought together to create one entry point into accommodation for 16+ and care leavers. This will mean young people have access to accommodation options across the Young Persons Pathway and Semi-Independent Living Framework, ensuring the most appropriate placement is provided. There are also plans to review our pathway plans for care leavers. All of which will be worked up in the Preparation for Independence strategy.

Continually Improve our Performance Information Systems

It is clear there are still improvements to be made to ensure the reliability of our performance information. For example, we know we need:

- More consistent looked after child profile data (e.g. sibling groups, overnight respite services)
- A means of capturing and consistently recording interviews carried out with young people who go missing from home to understand the reasons why placements break down and the actions taken
- Consistent or standardised methodology and performance management systems
- Information on provider performance (including any changes to Ofsted ratings)
- Individual line data analysis to enable trends analysis in the looked after children population and their characteristics (e.g. characteristics of children whose placements break down).

As part of the overarching Looked After Children strategy, we will also explore the creation of a specific looked after children health database that will allow practitioners to understand trends in health needs and facilitate targeted interventions to improve their health outcomes.

Accelerate the Cultural Change across the Council through Corporate Parenting Agenda

Improving outcomes for Lambeth’s looked after children is a council-wide responsibility as each service and department can have an impact on life outcomes for children on the edge of, or in, care. For example, planning departments could consider adding in children’s social care obligations into developer’s funding packages, providing a new stream of income for the service. This thinking is being developed further as part of the Lambeth’s corporate parenting strategy.

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15 We are currently working with our public health colleagues on profiling looked after children as part of the development of Lambeth’s Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.
## CHILDREN’S SOCIAL CARE SUFICIENCY ACTION PLAN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Develop In-House Provision</th>
<th>Grow Specialist Provision and Capability</th>
<th>Improve the way we Commission Services</th>
<th>Streamline our Quality Assurance and Governance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Increased number of foster carers</td>
<td>• Standardised agreements for all providers</td>
<td>• Established multi-disciplinary operational edge of care team</td>
<td>• Lambeth monitoring structures aligned with Ofsted requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Existing foster carers trained to provide specialist placements</td>
<td>• Market Position Statement published</td>
<td>• Families with young people at risk of violence supported</td>
<td>• Clear functions and responsibilities of placement panels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lambeth Foster Carers are an attractive offer</td>
<td>• IFA and residential providers meet demand</td>
<td>• Service is sustained and expanded through savings made</td>
<td>• Regular progress reviews through established Programme Board and senior executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased pool of long-term foster carers</td>
<td>• Achieve savings through innovation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Establish an Edge of Care Service
- Improved transition between front line services and Adoptions Team
- Timely adoptive placements, especially for children under five
- Annual reviews of adoptive allowances
- Early engagement with SEN Team

### Facilitate Permanency Adoptive Placements
- Lambeth monitoring structures aligned with Ofsted requirements
- Clear functions and responsibilities of placement panels
- Regular progress reviews through established Programme Board and senior executive

### Grow Specialist Provision and Capability
- Stronger multi-agency working
- Evidenced provider systems for child protection and exploitation
- Positive role models and mentors for LAC
- Framework established for residential schools

### Develop In-House Provision
- Positive role models and mentors for LAC
- Framework established for residential schools

### Improve the way we Commission Services
- Standardised agreements for all providers
- Market Position Statement published
- IFA and residential providers meet demand
- Established options for short-term emergency/urgent placements
- Achieve savings through innovation