

## Southampton Children and Learning Service - Sufficiency Update

There is a legal duty placed upon the council to secure sufficient accommodation within the authority's area which meets the needs of children that the council are looking after.

The range of accommodation within the scope of the sufficiency duty includes adoption, foster care, children's homes and supportive accommodation.

The previous update on Placement Sufficiency was in July 2021 - [PowerPoint Presentation \(southampton.gov.uk\)](https://www.southampton.gov.uk). The briefing below provides the Panel with an update on key developments since then.

### Sufficiency Project Board

The sufficiency project board, sponsored by Rob Henderson, now oversees the key aspects of sufficiency, including residential children's homes, the 'Step Across' project, accommodation for care leavers, reunification, and the new 'Staying Close' initiative.

The Sufficiency Strategy is in the process of being updated.

### Residential Project Update

#### Westridge (Portswood)

This is a 6-bed home (four placements) in Portswood on which we have had an offer accepted. We have completed all the preliminary surveys, cost of building works etc and have a planning application ready for submission. There is a delay in proceedings as the vendor is yet to seek a new property for him and his family to move in to. Building works are estimated to take 6-9 months and we will start recruiting staff and get the Ofsted application in during this time. On this basis the estimate of a time for opening would be Oct/Nov '23 but this is dependent on a completion date for the sale.

#### Coxford Road (Lordshill)

We have submitted a match funding bid for the demolition of the existing site and developing a new build 6-bed home (four placements) using the plans that Hampshire CC used for their homes. The total cost is estimated at £2m and we have put in a bid for £1m. The site clearance and build timeline is estimated at 12 months. The timeline for completion depends on the practicalities of moving existing teams out. If the bid is successful, the estimate for a home opening would be Spring '24.

#### Westwood (Bitterne)

We have revised costing for re-development of the site and are proceeding to tender for building works. Timelines are similar to the Westridge site but as Solent already own the site we should be able to move on this one quicker subject to the tender process. Expectations are that we should be in a position to open in the autumn of '23. This would provide us with 3 placements as we plan to sell one to Hampshire to support with revenue costs.

## Quarterly Foster Carer Recruitment Report (mainstream foster carers):

Quarter 2 (2022/23) – July, August, September 2022

### What does the data tell us?

Indicator	2022/23	2021/22
Total number of enquires	45	58
Total number of screening calls	34	40
Total number of initial home visits	17	19
Total number of applications received	3	4
Households in assessment (at end of Q)	11	8
Approvals within the Q (ADM decision)	6	4
Mainstream resignations and/or de-registrations within the Q	2	6

### Overview of positive outcomes:

#### What's going well?

- Number of approvals in Q2 exceeded last year (both the Q2 total and the whole year total)
- New staff in the recruitment part of the service have been appointed; Senior Business Development Officer (starting Jan 2023) and full-time Recruitment Officer (started beginning of October 2022)
- At end of Q2 the overall conversion rate is 10%
- At end of Q2 we are working with an overall net gain of 3 fostering households. We are on track to have a net gain of 9 households in 22/23.
- Number of households in assessment is greater than same period last year.

#### What are we worried about?

##### Areas of concern

- Enquiries are lower than the same period last year
- Number of foster carers on-hold is increasing and may lead to resignations

##### Challenges to service delivery

- Placement instability and retention concerns are taking management time away from recruitment oversight.

### **What is our focus for next Quarter?**

- New Recruitment Officer to be embedded within the team and take the lead on responding to and tracking enquiries to point of application.
- End to End Process Review outcomes to be shared with the whole team – actions to be assigned to staff.
- Ensure all households in Stage 1 are processed by end of Q3 to ensure Stage 2 can be completed by end of year. Q3 is a key time in the assessment process as assessment not moving into Stage 2 before Christmas cannot usually be completed, presented to Panel and achieve ADM ratification, by the end of the year.
- Snr SW is undertaking a full 'stocktake' of all approved fostering households to explore:
  - Possible availability for Step-Across children/young people
  - Possible increased availability for respite/emergency
  - Children and young people moving on – can a match be made with a new placement
  - Possible scope for legal permanence via SGO or Adoption
  - Possible opportunities for reunification with birth family
  - Review all households on hold