

## **Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**10 June 2026**

### **Sufficiency Strategy 2026-29 A Place Called Home**

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#### Summary

A sufficiency strategy for children’s services is a mandated document for all local authorities and needs to be published on the Council website. Local authorities have a **statutory duty under Section 22G of the Children Act 1989** (introduced by the Children and Young Persons Act 2008) to: **“Take steps to secure, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for looked after children within their area.”**

A sufficiency strategy focuses on ensuring there is enough high-quality, appropriate support and provision available locally to meet the needs of children and families. It prioritises early help, prevention, and effective placement planning so that children can remain safely within their families or communities wherever possible, reducing reliance on high-cost or out-of-area provision while improving outcomes and stability. This will update on the previous 2023-26 strategy and propose areas of development for the Council over the next 3 years. It needs a wider collective of Council Services to deliver the plan and so has wider commitment outside of Childrens Social Care.

#### 1. Recommendations

- 1.1. The Committee is asked to note the progress of the Sufficiency Strategy 2023- 2026.
- 1.2. The Committee is asked to note the priorities for the next 3 years.

#### 2. Budget and policy framework

- 2.1. This decision is within the council’s policy and budget framework meets both our statutory duties but also links in with the Regional care Co-operatives Regional Sufficiency strategy and a range of internal strategies as well as supporting the new reforms agenda

### 3. Background

3.1. Medway's Sufficiency Strategy "A Place Called Home 2023-26" has come to an

end and a multi-agency working group has been working on the new draft strategy which has been going through governance for the past few months. This summarises progress, continued areas of development and emerging priorities and new challenges.

3.2. A significant amount of encouraging change and progress has happened over the past 3 years including positive inspection outcomes, new and updated services and provisions and reduction in overall need for placement sufficiency. As well as developing needs such as an increase in family and child placements and Medway joining the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) for our young refugee children.

### 4. Advice and analysis

4.1. Publishing an agreed Sufficiency strategy is a statutory duty for all Local Authorities. The strategy should be a data and needs led document recognising strengths weaknesses and areas of development and improvement. This will form part of the evidence for future Ofsted Inspections for the authority.

### 5. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Not meeting our legal obligations	If a current strategy is not agreed and published, then we will not be meeting our statutory duty as a local authority	Ensure robust and timely governance for sign off and ensure final document is well designed and accessible	CII

For risk rating, please refer to the following table:

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very likely	I Catastrophic
B Likely	II Major
C Unlikely	III Moderate
D Rare	IV Minor

### 6. Consultation

6.1. Stakeholders including parents and carers were involved in the co-production of this strategy. This will also be translated into a young person friendly version which will capture key elements over 2/3 pages once agreed

## 7. Climate change implications

- 7.1. The Strategy outlines plans to place children nearer to home where safe and appropriate to do so. This means less travel for families, children and professionals.

## 8. Financial implications

- 8.1. Funding for placements (including these external placements) will continue to be funded from the general revenue budget as it is a statutory duty for the local authority to provide sufficient care and accommodation for children in care.
- 8.2. The sufficiency challenges outlined will have or have the potential to create significant financial pressures. The sufficiency priorities outlined in the strategy are designed to help mitigate or reduce the potential financial pressures from arising or escalating.
- 8.3. The priority actions outlined in the strategy, if requiring additional funding over and above the budget to implement, will be the subject to the normal governance processes.

## 9. Legal implications

- 9.1. Local Authorities are required to take steps to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for Children in Care within their local area. In 2010 the Statutory Guidance for the sufficiency duty was issued. This guidance is explicit in placing a duty on Local Authorities to act strategically to address gaps in provision by ensuring they include in relevant commissioning strategies their plans for meeting the sufficiency duty.
- 9.2. The sufficiency duty is a measure, which is part of a broad suite of guidance, and legislative provisions introduced to improve outcomes for children in care. Local Authorities should consider the sufficiency duty in tandem with their duties towards children within their area under S17(1), 20, 21, 22C and 23 of the Children Act 1989.
- 9.3. Section 22G Children Act 1989 also imposes a duty on local authorities to take steps that secure, so far as reasonably practicable, that the local authority is able to provide looked after children with accommodation within the authority's area that meets the needs of those children, where circumstances are such that it would be consistent with the children's welfare for them to be provided with accommodation.
- 9.4. In taking steps to secure the provision of accommodation, the local authority must have regard to the benefit of having a sufficient number of accommodation providers in their area and a sufficient range of accommodation in their area capable of meeting different needs.
- 9.5. In exercising the sufficiency duty, Local Authorities should be mindful that under section 10 of the Children Act ('the 2004 Act') there is a duty upon

Local Authorities to make arrangements to promote co-operation with its relevant partners with a view to improving the wellbeing of children in the authority's area. Each of the statutory 'relevant partners' in section 10 of the Act is also required to co-operate with the Local Authority in making those arrangements. The duty on Local Authorities to secure sufficient accommodation should therefore be undertaken within the context of the planning and co-operation duties which the 2004 Act places on partners in order to improve the wellbeing of the child in the area.

- 9.6. A failure to meet the general sufficiency duty could result in judicial review proceedings, and/or damages claims for breach of the Human Rights Act 1998, proceedings against the Council which could have huge costs implications.

### Lead officer contact

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### Appendices

Appendix 1 – Draft Sufficiency Strategy 2026-29

### Background papers

None