

Proposal

Change of use from a single dwelling house into a children's home for up to three children (C2 Use Class). New replacement doors and windows. New external ramp. Internal alterations.

At

2 Cedars Drive, Uxbridge UB10 0JT



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Introduction

The site is located on Cedars Drive and comprises of a detached bungalow. The surrounding area is residential in nature. The property is set back from the frontage with an area of hardstanding. The hardstanding provides parking for up to 3 cars. To the rear is a large private garden. The site is not known to be in a conservation area nor does it comprise of a listed building. The site has a PTAL of 0. The site is not in a flood zone 2 or 3.

Planning Policy

Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for the London Borough of Hillingdon currently consists of the following documents: -

- The Local Plan: Part 1 - Strategic Policies (2012)
- The Local Plan Part 2 - Development Management Policies (2020)
- The Local Plan Part 2 - Site Allocations and Designations (2020)
- The London Plan - 2021
- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021) is also a material consideration in planning decisions, as well as relevant supplementary planning documents and guidance.

The principle of the development

Use Class C2 is defined by the Use Classes Order as Residential institutions. That is use for the provision of residential accommodation and care to people in need of care (other than a use within class C3 (dwelling houses)).

A change of use is proposed from a 3-bed dwelling house to C2. The existing dwelling has three double bedrooms and can provide accommodation for up to 6 people. It has a kitchen, bathroom, ensuite facility, lounge and conservatory.

The use of previously developed land is supported by the Local Plan, London Plan and NPPF. London Plan Policy H12 states 'The delivery, retention and refurbishment of **supported and specialised housing which meets an identified need should be supported**. The form this takes will vary, and it should be designed to satisfy the requirements of the specific use or group it is intended for, whilst providing options within the accommodation offer for the diversity of London's population, including disabled Londoners (see Policy D7 Accessible housing) within a wider inclusive community setting. Boroughs should undertake assessments of the need for short-term, medium-term and permanent supported and specialised accommodation within their borough. Supported and specialised accommodation could include: -

1. accommodation for people leaving hostels, refuges and other supported housing, as well as care leavers and people leaving prison to enable them to live independently.
2. **accommodation for young people with support needs**
3. reablement accommodation (intensive short-term) for people who are ready to be discharged from hospital but who require additional support to be able to return safely to live independently at home, or to move into appropriate long-term accommodation.
4. accommodation for disabled people (including people with physical and sensory impairments and learning difficulties) who require additional support or for whom living independently is not possible
5. accommodation (short-term or long-term) for people with mental health issues who require intensive support
6. accommodation for rough sleepers
7. accommodation for victims of domestic abuse
8. accommodation for victims of violence against women and girls.

Policy DMH 1 of the Hillingdon Local Plan Part 2 - Development Management Policies (2020) states that 'The net loss of existing self-contained housing, including affordable housing, will be resisted unless the housing is replaced with at least equivalent residential floorspace. Under section B, policy DMH 1 states that the Council will grant planning permission for the subdivision of dwellings only if: -

- i) car parking standards can be met within the curtilage of the site without being detrimental to the street scene;
- ii) all units are self contained with exclusive use of sanitary and kitchen facilities and provided with individual entrances and internal staircases to serve units above ground floor level;
- iii) adequate amenity space is provided for the benefit of residents; and
- iv) adequate living space standards are met.

Policy DMH 8 of the Hillingdon Local Plan Part 2 - Development Management Policies (2020) states that the development of residential care homes and other types of supported housing will be permitted provided that: -

- i) it would not lead to an over concentration of similar uses detrimental to residential character or amenity and complies with Policy DMH 4: Residential Conversions.
 - ii) it caters for need identified in the Council's Housing Market Assessment, in a needs assessment of a recognised public body, or within an appropriate needs assessment and is deemed to be responding to the needs identified by the Council or other recognised public body such as the Mental Health Trust;
 - iii) the accommodation is fully integrated into the residential surroundings; and
 - iv) in the case of sheltered housing, it is located near to shops and community facilities and is easily accessible by public transport.
- B) Proposals for residential care establishments which fall under Use Class C2 must demonstrate that they would provide levels of care as defined in Article 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended).

Policy DMH 4 (mentioned above in Policy DMH 8) of the Hillingdon Local Plan Part 2 - Development Management Policies (2020) states 'Residential conversions and the redevelopment of dwellings into new blocks of flats will only be permitted where:

- i) it is on a residential street where the proposal will not result in more than 10% of properties being redeveloped into flats;
- ii) On residential streets longer than 1km the proposed redevelopment site should be taken as the midpoint of a 1km length of road for assessment purposes;
- iii) the internal floor area of the original building to be converted is at least 120 sqm; and
- iv) units are limited to one unit per floor for residential conversions.

The proposal is for the change of use of the property from C3 to C2. There will be a maximum of two members of staff (carers) at any time and a site manager of whom would come and go. The staff will be on a shift pattern. There will be up to three children receiving care. The age of the children will be 8 to 16. The total number of occupants at any time would be 6no which is akin to that what would be expected of a typical house of this size. The children come from a range of different backgrounds and have varied experiences in life. Everyone has their own different and specific sets of needs. They will all share one thing in common in that they are vulnerable individuals in need of care. The requirement for providing care to the children residing at the premises is set out below: -

- Previous experiences of abuse.
- Previous experiences of neglect.
- Complex emotional needs.
- Complex mental health needs and learning disabilities.
- Increased vulnerability.
- Lack of stable relationships.

The aim of the care is to facilitate the following for the individuals involved: -

- Provide emotional wellbeing.
- Supporting emotional needs.
- Supporting mental health needs.
- Giving children a voice.
- Giving children influence.
- Improving understanding of how to identify damaging situations.
- Improving decision making.

There is a need to provide the type of accommodation within the area. The children are at risk and currently do not have a residence due to lack of capacity for such accommodation. An OFSTEAD report published in July 2022 reveals the following: -

- *“Children in the care system are often placed in homes far away from their families because of a lack of suitable places near to where they live.”*
- *“The research suggests that children are living far away from their families because homes are not evenly distributed across the regions of England, meaning supply does not match demand.”*

An article by community care dated March 2022 further illustrates a lack of appropriate arrangements in this regard: -

- *“Local authorities are struggling to manage the children’s homes market, amid a shortage of suitable placements.”*
- *Almost half (44%) had either no publicly available or no up-to-date strategy to secure sufficient local accommodation for looked-after children.”*

A BBC report has emphasised the lack of suitable childcare. It states: -

- *“Severe care home shortages across England are forcing vulnerable children to be sent away for specialist care.”*

According to a house of commons committee report dated July 2022:-

- *“The number of children in children’s homes rose by 16% between 2015 and 2020. Research commissioned by the County Councils Network forecasts that by 2025, almost 100,000 children could be in care.”*

This reflects the wider increase in the number of looked-after children and highlights a need for children’s care homes (i.e., justifying the need). It illustrates that stock is not meeting current requirement. Further details can be found in the appendix section of this report. The application is clearly aimed at children of whom have supported needs in line with London Plan Policy **H12** and Local Policy **DH8**. A search of the area reveals that there are no other care homes of this type in the local area specifically orientated around children. This further verifies compliance with policy **DH8**.

- Attock Homes is 0.5 miles away and provides supported living accommodation for 16 - 18 year olds and Care Leavers.
- Parkfield House Nursing Home is 1 mile away but orientated around the elderly.
- Marian House is 1.2 miles away and is a nursing home providing care to the elderly
- Heathfield House is 1.2 miles away and is a nursing home providing care to the elderly
- Kingsley Court Care Home is 1.2 miles away and is a nursing home providing care to the elderly including those with dementia.
- Home start is 1.4 miles away and offers support to families with young children, i.e offering support to young mothers.
- Merchiston House Care Home is 1.6 miles away and is a nursing home providing care to the elderly.

- Alvina Lodge Care Home is 1.7 miles away and is a nursing home providing care to the elderly.
- Aston House Care Home is 1.7 miles away and is a retirement home providing care to the elderly.
- Charville Lane Children's Home is 1.9 miles away and provides child care for orphans.
- New Horizon Care Home is 2.0 miles away and provides support to adults with mental disabilities.
- Chapel Lane Care Home

Taking into consideration the above it is noted that the proposed use falls within Use Class C2 and would provide the levels of care associated with that Use Class in compliance with **DH8**. It is considered that the proposed development would not result in an over concentration of care homes or similar C2 uses in the area. A planning history search of the immediate area suggests that there are no similar uses within close proximity of the site including flat conversions thus complying with **DH4**. In addition the existing dwelling has a floor area of 122m².

The care home will be operated by a registered provider. The provider's mission is as follows: -

- To provide a motivating environment where children can achieve, build positive friendships with their peers and most importantly call home.
- Promote equality for its occupants to ensure they are viewed and heard as individuals.
- Promote the safety and wellbeing of people who use their services.
- Build self-assurance and self-esteem in children.
- To generate a culture of openness and trust.
- Support individuals in their education and meaningful activities.
- Encourage long term healthy lifestyles.

The main objective of the provider is to create a place to live, learn and thrive with all the care and support children need from their highly trained carers and support workers. The property will be staffed by a team of experienced, dedicated and fully trained support workers of whom combine this professional experience with a family perspective to create a dynamic service that strives to offer children with better outcomes and wider horizons. The provider has 14 staff on hand. Only 2 staff will be present at the property at any time including a manager of whom will pop in from time to time. An application to OFSTEAD has been submitted for review.

The provider has confirmed that the proposed living environment is designed to safely support the children's behaviours and there is 24-hour care provided by qualified and well-trained staff. The care home will be closely monitored and continually risk-assessed to ensure the utmost level of safety for the people in care.

It is acknowledged that the proposal would result in the loss of a C3 residential dwelling, albeit the site would still provide a form of residential accommodation. In an application for 102 Weymouth Road under Ref: 22898/APP/2021/3312 the Borough's Contracts & Supplier Relationships Manager within the Provider Services & Commissioned Care team was consulted on the application. This team has advised that there is a need for children's care homes in the borough. This carries weight in the decision and the provision of a children's care home can be considered a planning benefit in this case again illustrating compliance with policy **DH8**.

The existing three-bedroom home could potentially house a large family of up to 6 people with associated comings and goings. It is considered that at the scale proposed, the development would not result in harmful levels of noise and disturbance that would be out of keeping with a residential area. Additionally, the facility is to be managed by staff which will assist with minimising the potential for adverse impacts upon the amenity of occupiers of neighbouring dwellings by way of noise or anti-social behaviour. The proposal includes minimal external alterations to the existing dwelling and would cause no visual harm to the appearance of the area. The proposal has adequate parking, it is self-contained and provides good living conditions as discussed further below in line with policy **DH1**. The proposal is therefore considered to integrate into its residential surroundings and is acceptable in principle.

Impact on the character & appearance of the area

Local Plan Policy BE1 states 'The Council will require all new development to improve and maintain the quality of the built environment in order to create successful and sustainable neighbourhoods, where people enjoy living and working and that serve the long-term needs of all residents. All new developments should achieve a high quality of design in all new buildings, alterations, extensions and the public realm which enhances the local distinctiveness of the area, contributes to community cohesion and a sense of place'. Policy DMHB 11 states 'All development, including extensions, alterations and new buildings will be required to be designed to the highest standards and, incorporate principles of good design including: i) harmonising with the local context by taking into account the surrounding scale of development, height, mass and bulk of adjacent structures; building plot sizes and widths, plot coverage and established street patterns; building lines and setbacks, rooflines, streetscape rhythm, for example, gaps between structures and other streetscape elements, such as degree of enclosure; architectural composition and quality of detailing; local topography, views both from and to the site; and impact on neighbouring open spaces and their environment'.

The proposal includes new windows and doors. These would match the existing dwelling and wider area. The proposal also involves a new ramp to promote equality amongst users. This would be located at the side of the property and not visible from the street. There is no adverse impact in this regard.

Impact on neighbours

Local Plan Policy DMHB 11 sets out design guidance for all new development in the borough. Part B of the policy states 'Development proposals should not adversely impact on the amenity, daylight and sunlight of adjacent properties and open space'. Guidance for Policy DMHB 11 states 'The Council will aim to ensure that there is sufficient privacy for residents and it will resist proposals where there is an unreasonable level of overlooking between habitable rooms of adjacent residential properties, schools or onto private open spaces. Paragraph 130 (f) of the NPPF (2021) states that new development should seek to 'create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience'. Taking into consideration that the building subject of this application already exists and that no changes are proposed to its bulk, scale or height. The proposed development would have no harmful overbearing or enclosing impact on neighbouring dwellings. Nor would it lead to any additional loss of outlook or additional loss of light to neighbouring properties. The relationship between the subject building and other buildings in the area is established.

The front elevation windows of the existing dwelling provide views toward the street. The rear elevation windows provide views toward the property's rear garden. The proposed development includes no additional windows (in relation to the existing situation) and therefore the care home would provide identical views to the existing dwelling. Furthermore the 3-bedroom dwelling is being replaced by a 3 bedroom care home, the change of use is unlikely to result in a significant increase in people at the site. For these reasons, it is considered that the proposal would not result in a harmful increase in overlooking or a loss of privacy to other property nearby.

As discussed previously, the scale of the proposal is considered such that levels of noise and/or disturbance from comings and goings to the premises would not be dissimilar to that which could occur in a typical family dwellinghouse. The proposal would therefore not be incompatible with the residential location.

Living conditions of future occupiers

Paragraph 130(f) of the NPPF (2021) quoted previously, seeks to promote health and well-being, and a high standard of amenity for existing and future users of a development. Furthermore, London Plan (2021) Policy D6 and Hillingdon Local Plan Part 2 - Development Management Policies (2020) Policy DMHB 16 seek to ensure housing is of high quality. This objective is considered relevant to the proposed care home use. The proposed care home includes 3 bedrooms, each bedroom would have a window providing unimpeded outlook and access to natural light. Residents of the care home would also have access to shared facilities including a bathroom, a lounge / dining room and kitchen. Office space would also be provided within the property for the site's management team/staff. The shared residential environments considered to be fit for purpose as it comprises numerous shared and private spaces for the site's future residents and management team.

Whilst not entirely applicable, it should be noted that each bedroom within the care home would exceed the minimum floorspace standards for a single bedroom and double bedroom as outlined in Policy D6 of the London Plan (2021) and the National Space Standards. Taking into consideration the above, the proposal is considered to provide an acceptable level of amenity for its future users.

Policy DMHB 18: Private Outdoor Amenity Space states that applications for residential development should provide adequate levels of private, well designed and located amenity space. There are no specific private amenity space standards for C2 uses in the Local Plan. A large garden space would be provided for the occupants of the care home.

Taking into consideration the above it is considered that adequate amenity space would be provided for future occupants of the care home. Notwithstanding the above assessment, in terms of ensuring an acceptable quality of accommodation and care for occupiers, it is noted that the proposed care home would be subject to controls and regulation outside of the planning system and would be registered with OFSTED.

Highways

The site has a PTAL rating of 1b (very poor level of accessibility) and the London Plan (2021) does not have a specific parking standard for the proposed use. Policy DMT 6 is considered to be applicable to the proposed development. With regard to the parking provision requirements for care homes, Policy DMT 6 states 'Either using a transport assessment and travel plan, or 1 space per four dwelling units, minimum 2 spaces, plus 1 space for warden. Where relevant provision is also to be made for emergency vehicle parking, loading and unloading'. Additionally secure and sheltered cycle parking is required based on 1 space provision per 3 staff. Taking into consideration the above, 3 on-site car parking spaces are required and 1 cycle space is considered to be required. The submitted plans show that 3 vehicle parking spaces would be provided within the site frontage and 1 no cycle space. This is considered policy compliant.

Access

Reasonable provision is made to accommodate all users of the property. A new ramp is proposed to the side elevation of the building to promote equality. Moreover there are 2 bedrooms located at the ground floor and a downstairs bathroom. In this regard the proposal provides reasonable access to those with physical disabilities. It should be noted that the proposal is not specifically orientated around those with physical disability.

Fire safety

The proposal will:

- 1) identify suitably positioned unobstructed outside space: a) for fire appliances to be positioned on b) appropriate for use as an evacuation assembly point
- 2) be designed to incorporate appropriate features which reduce the risk to life and the risk of serious injury in the event of a fire; including appropriate fire alarm systems and passive and active fire safety measures
- 3) be constructed in an appropriate way to minimise the risk of fire spread
- 4) provide suitable and convenient means of escape, and associated evacuation strategy for all building users
- 5) develop a robust strategy for evacuation which can be periodically updated and published, and which all building users can have confidence in
- 6) provide suitable access and equipment for firefighting which is appropriate for the size and use of the development.

Appendix

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Press release

Many children placed in homes far away from their families amid national sufficiency challenge

An Ofsted report published today suggests that there are too few suitable places to keep children in care close to home.

From:

[Ofsted \(/government/organisations/ofsted\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted)

Published

8 July 2022



Children in the care system are often placed in homes far away from their families because of a lack of suitable places near to where they live, Ofsted research published today suggests.

Ofsted's report, '[What types of needs do children's homes offer care for?](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-types-of-needs-do-childrens-homes-offer-care-for?)' (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-types-of-needs-do-childrens-homes-offer-care-for>) finds that children with mental health problems, or experience of abuse and neglect, are likely to be living the furthest away from their home prior to coming into care, and above the average distance of 36 miles.

The research suggests that children are living far away from their families because homes are not evenly distributed across the regions of England, meaning supply does not match demand. For example, just 5% of England's children's homes (7% of places) are located in London, but London local authorities placed 11% of all children living in homes. In contrast, local authorities in the North West placed 19% of children living in children's homes, but 25% of all homes (23% of places) are located in the region.

Yvette Stanley, Ofsted's National Director for Children's Social Care, said:

- " Today's research shows that this is a national challenge. It suggests that Local Authorities are making a difficult choice between placing a child either in a home close by, or in one that is far away but relevant to their needs.
- " Children need provision of the right care, in the right place, at the right time. And for some children, it is only through a better needs analysis and planning across health and social care at a national level, that they will be able to stay closer to their family and friends."

Ofsted's research, which is based on data up to 31 March 2020, aims to contribute to the wider conversation around why there may be barriers to achieving sufficiency of places in children's homes.

Other findings in the report include:

- there was no link between the types of needs that homes said they could accommodate and their Ofsted inspection grades.
- a very high proportion of children living in children's homes had special educational needs (80%) compared with all children looked after (52%) and all children (around 15%)
- the majority of homes (80%) said they could accommodate 2 or more areas of need, with one fifth (20%) saying they could accommodate only one area
- providers that stated they could accommodate children with complex needs were the most common (93%), while sensory impairment (4%) and complex health needs (5%) were the least common
- the majority (83%) of children's homes included in the report were privately owned on 31 March 2020, which marked an increase from 69% on the same date in 2016

Press office

8.30am to 6pm Monday to Friday 0300 013 0415

Published 8 July 2022

Explore the topic

[Children's homes and other accommodation \(/childcare-parenting/childrens-homes-and-other-accommodation\)](/childcare-parenting/childrens-homes-and-other-accommodation)

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Care home shortages: London children sent to Scotland

🕒 10 January



Young people from London are being sent to Scotland amid shortages of children care homes

Children in need of care in London are being sent 450 miles away due to lack of care home capacity in England, a report has revealed.

Lewisham Council data shows between December 2021 and September 2022, 12 children were sent to secure welfare facilities outside the capital.

At least three of those children were sent to homes in Scotland.

Severe care home shortages across England are forcing vulnerable children to be sent away for specialist care.

Secure children's home are facilities designed for children aged 10 to 17 who pose a risk to themselves or others. These children may have a history of fleeing from previous care homes or need to be detained as they await trial or sentencing for a crime.

- **Children's homes close after BBC reveals failures**

Lewisham and Barnet councils are planning to build London's first secure children's home that will have room to look after up to 24 children.

Led by Barnet Council, the home, expected to open by 2026, is being funded by the Department of Education which has committed £50m.

Lewisham Council will contribute a further £20,000 a year for the upkeep and running of the building.

Under current plans, which are set to be approved at a cabinet meeting on Wednesday, Lewisham Council would continue to oversee the running of the home until at least 2028.

The **Local Democracy Reporting Service** found the cost of building and maintaining a secure children's home was too high for an individual council to shoulder alone. Barnet Council is hopeful other London authorities will join the project.

According to Lewisham Council documents, the average cost of a secure welfare placement in London has increased - from £7,000 a week in 2019, rising to £10,500 a week in 2022. Some local authorities have paid up to £25,000 a week for secure welfare placements in that period.

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Children in care have been let down

What can the Government do to improve their educational outcomes?



By MPs on the Education Committee

Published on Friday 8 July 2022

We launched our inquiry on Children's Homes in March 2021, as part of our continuing work on the issues faced by left-behind children. This time, we wanted to look into the educational outcomes of children in children's homes and how these can be improved.

We heard from a range of stakeholders, including the Children's Commissioner and the Minister for Children and Families. We also held a private session with four young people with experience of life in a children's home. We are extremely grateful to them for talking to us candidly and powerfully about their experiences. Their contributions have formed an important part of our thinking.

Read on to hear what we found.



80,850 children were in care in 2021

The number of children in care in England has been increasing every year since 2008, and in 2021 rose to 80,850, the highest ever level on record. Research commissioned by the County Councils Network revealed that the number of children in care could almost reach 100,000 by 2025.

Why is the number of children in care increasing?

This is what we heard:

- fewer children have been leaving care over the recent years;
- local authorities have become better at identifying children who are vulnerable, bringing them into care;
- the covid-19 pandemic placed additional strain on already struggling families, while rates of mental health needs and special educational needs among children have risen;
- spending on early intervention has reduced by 48% in the last decade.



The lack of post-16 funding

Just 7.2% of looked-after children achieved the grade 5 ‘good pass’ threshold in English and mathematics GCSEs, compared to 40.1% of non-looked-after children.

Research by the universities of Bristol and Oxford found that children in residential care scored over six grades less at GCSE than those in kinship or foster care.

Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) Funding

Local authorities currently receive Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) funding of £2,410 per child in care, from reception age to age 15. This is vital funding used to improve education outcomes of looked-after children. But when the child turns 16, the funding stops.

The lack of post-16 PP+ funding is a significant inequality given that an increased number of children are entering care later. As at March 2021, almost a quarter of all children in care were aged 16 or older.

It is incomprehensible that the funding is just turned off when children turn 16. Children in residential care – who tend to be older – are likely to be disproportionately affected by the lack of post-16 pupil premium.



Access to schools



According to the School Admissions Code, looked-after children must be given “highest priority” in oversubscription criteria. Under the Code, a local authority has the power to instruct schools to admit a looked-after child, even if the school is full.

What happens if a school refuses to admit a looked-after child?

During our evidence sessions, we heard that refusing to admit a looked-after child is a relatively low-risk process for a school. There are no sanctions for schools refusing to admit a looked-after child, and the appeals process can be extremely slow.

We also heard that some schools discriminate against children in care.

Getting looked-after children into the best schools

During our inquiry we heard that despite the law clearly stating that good and outstanding schools should be prioritised for looked-after children, children in care are in fact less likely to attend the best schools than their peers.

"When you try to place a vulnerable young person in a mainstream school you get a lot of pushback. Essentially, schools do not want to take these young people because they believe there will be a negative impact on their outcomes."

Patrick Ward, Chair, National Association of Virtual School Headteachers (NAVSH), oral submission to the Committee

"What we want to see are the good and outstanding schools asking to have the looked-after children [...]. I think there is a leadership issue here."

Rachel de Souza, Children's Commissioner for England, oral submission to the Committee

Unregulated education

All looked-after children should be receiving full-time education in a Department of Education registered school. This does not always happen. Ofsted research identifies that of a sample of 2,600 children in residential care, 9% are in unregulated education provision, while 6% are not in education, employment or training. We heard concerns that processes for tracking looked-after children missing from education are insufficient – meaning that vulnerable children are falling through the cracks.

"I really wanted to go to school, and I asked. What I was told, after asking, was that I couldn't go to school, but that the next best thing was to do it online on the computer. It was an alternative, but it wasn't school."

The cliff-edge transition to independent living



During our inquiry we heard that too often care leavers don't receive the support that they need during their transition to independent living. 41% of care-leavers aged 19-21 are not in education, employment or training, up from 39% in 2020.

Apprenticeships

Just 2% of care-leavers go into apprenticeships. The £4.81 hourly apprenticeship wage rate is prohibitive for young care leavers living independently. The £1,000 bursary introduced by the Department for Education for care leavers starting an apprenticeship is welcome, but is not enough to make apprenticeships a financially viable option for young care leavers living independently.

Staying Close

Staying Close is a support program for young people leaving children's homes. It helps them find housing, get into jobs or training and provides emotional support. The Department has been piloting Staying Close for the past 4 years. Independent assessments of the pilot have shown considerable benefits, including 75% reduction in eviction rates and 50% reduction in the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training.

The lack of support for young people leaving residential care is deeply unjust.



Our recommendations



To improve the outcomes of children in care, we call on the Government to:

1. End the culture of impunity: hold schools accountable for refusing to admit looked-after children and introduce sanctions for schools who block admissions from looked-after children.
2. Extend Pupil Premium Plus funding beyond age 16 to ensure looked-after pupils are receiving the support they deserve to do well throughout their education.
- 3.

What happens next



The Government must now respond to our report.

Our report "[Educational Poverty: how children in residential care have been let down and what to do about it](#)" was published on Friday 8 July.

The Government has two months to respond to our report.

[Detailed information from our inquiry can be found on our website.](#)

If you're interested in our work, [you can find out more on the Education Committee website](#). You can also [follow our work on Twitter](#).

The Education Committee scrutinises the work of the Department for Education, covering children's social care, schools, colleges, the early years and higher education.

[The updated membership of the Committee is available on our website.](#)

Our previous work on left-behind children



White working-class pupils have been let down

Read what we asked the Government to do to support them

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Councils struggling to manage children's homes market, amid placement shortage, study finds

Almost half of councils lack up-to-date strategy to secure sufficient placements for looked-after children while those that do are missing key information on market, says What Works

by **Rob Preston** on March 9, 2022 in **Children, Social work leaders**



Photo: fizkes/Adobe Stock

Local authorities are struggling to manage the children's homes market, amid a shortage of suitable placements, according to a study published yesterday.

Almost half (44%) had either no publicly available or no up-to-date strategy to secure sufficient local accommodation for looked-after children, found an analysis by What Works for Children's Social Care (WWCSC).

This is despite this being a requirement of [statutory guidance on councils' Children Act 1989 duty](#) to, as far as reasonably practicable, take steps to secure enough suitable accommodation locally for children in care, consistent with their welfare.

The lack of a strategy would also limit councils' ability to communicate information about expected demand to providers, said What Works, who was commissioned to undertake the study by the Independent Review of Children's Social Care.

Little analysis of local supply

However, the centre also found significant deficiencies in the strategies of the 84 English councils with an up-to-date plan.

Just 28% had a clear statement of whether they were under or over-supplied with residential provision or numerical information on the number of placements. Others stated they had insufficient placements, but without analysing underlying factors, or provided just a partial or no analysis of local supply.

While most strategies contained information on providers' costs, just 12 discussed price trends.

Just 34% reported changes in their demand for residential care and, while 41% provided forecasts of future need, just 10% presented a clear methodology for these estimates.

'Lack of transparent information on future need'

"It is thus unclear how LAs can meaningfully engage with providers given that – based on the material presented in the sufficiency strategies – LAs do not have transparent and/or reliable information around future need," the report said.

"This is a key area in need of improvement, considering that an analysis of previous and future demand constitutes the foundation of a sufficiency strategy."

Related articles

- [Government should be required to ensure enough secure placements, says Children's Commissioner](#)
- [Some firms 'profiteering' from children's homes, says minister](#)
- [Call for 'serious reform' to reduce number of children placed out of area](#)

WWCSC said it was unclear whether children, young people and providers had been consulted as part of most councils sufficiency strategies, and that this was a "key area of concern" and should be better reported in future strategies.

It also found few councils were clear in reflecting on how they had progressed since previous strategies and called on authorities to better document how they had implemented different commissioning approaches.

Significant barriers to local placements

The report found significant barriers to councils placing children locally, notably competing with other authorities for placements, which was even a problem in those councils who said they were over-supplied.

Some councils also described deficient local provision, unsuited to accommodating emergency, specialist or therapeutic placements.

Many councils said it was difficult to compare prices across different providers as these costs would often vary depending on occupancy, the children's varying care packages and the urgency of a placement.

They suggested that being better able to understand the true value for money of a placement would improve commissioning decisions.

Most councils were part of a regional commissioning framework, but many reported that these were not as effective as they hoped in improving access to high-quality and good-value placements due to some authorities and providers not taking part.

Councils 'failing to navigate and shape market' – MacAlister

Josh MacAlister, chair of the care review, set to publish in late spring, said the report showed that “on top of dealing with budget cuts, too many local authorities are failing to navigate and shape the marketised system of care for children”.

“Too often this means children are moved around the country, unable to stay at their school, remain in touch with their brothers or sisters or build new relationships that will last,” he said.

“The review will be making detailed recommendations to address this when we report in the spring.”

The What Works report also comes on the eve of the Competition and Markets Authority’s final report of its study on the children’s social care market this week, which MacAlister said he was looking forward to reading.

It also comes amid rising concerns among charities, local authorities and, latterly, children’s minister [Will Quince](#), about levels of profits in a market Quince described as “broken” due to demand far exceeding supply.

Directors: providers able to ‘pick and choose’ referrals

The Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS) said that, currently, providers were able to “pick and choose” which referrals to accept or not, due to the scarcity of placements.

“Local authorities are working hard to overcome the sufficiency challenges they face including by investing in their own children’s homes but need more support from government to ensure the right homes are available in the right places,” said Matt Dunkley, chair of the ADCS’s resources and sustainability policy committee.

He said councils were open to learning from what worked but added that improved commissioning “was not a panacea”.

“We also need a comprehensive placement strategy which addresses shortages across all types of placements to meet the needs of children and young people,” Dunkley added.

The Local Government Association said it had become more difficult for councils to find appropriate children’s homes as they were increasingly provided by the private sector and children’s needs had become more complex.

“While councils are working hard to improve sufficiency, this is challenging in a context in which staff capacity is under more pressure than ever and ownership of homes for children in care is increasingly concentrated in a small number of very large providers,” it said.



care placements, looked-after children