

# Regional commissioning

Open discussion re. group role in discussion with commissioners  
(Wednesday and other meetings)

# Stable Homes, Built on Love:

- **Commissioning care placements:** The DfE has backed the care review's proposal to transfer responsibility for the commissioning of care placements from individual councils to regional groupings of authorities, regional care co-operatives (RCCs), which will initially be tested in two pathfinder areas before being rolled out.
- It has also accepted the CMA's proposal to commission a national body to provide help for authorities/RCCs in forecasting demand and procurement. It said these measures would address the insufficiency of placements for children in care, improve outcomes and tackle the excess profit-making identified by the CMA among the largest providers.

# Cont'd

We need to take immediate action to:

- Boost the number of the right homes in the right places available for children as a matter of urgency.
- Review all legislation, regulations and standards of care to ensure all children in care receive what they need, no matter where they live.
- Financially oversee independent private and voluntary providers of foster homes and children's homes and deliver national support with forecasting, procurement and market shaping to local authorities.
- Work with local authorities to develop a regional model of planning, commissioning and providing homes for children in care

# Cont'd

- **Boosting the number of the right homes in the right places**

Local authorities have primary responsibility for the children in their care. This includes ensuring there is sufficient accommodation locally to meet the range of needs of children in care in their area.

The needs of the child are paramount when deciding the right place for a child to live.

Local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure there is sufficient provision for their children in care. This includes commissioning places from private or voluntary sector providers as required. We recognise the challenges that local authorities face when commissioning places.

Detailed below, we outline the national

- support to be provided with forecasting, procurement and market shaping.

# Cont'd

- We support the approach of a regional model for providing homes for children. We will work with local authorities to co-design and co-create Regional Care Cooperatives (RCCs) in two areas with a view to rolling out after testing and evaluating the best approach in conjunction with the sector.

While RCCs will signal a radical shift in the care system, they will need to build on the measures laid out at a local and sector level in order to boost sufficiency and ensure children can be matched to homes more effectively.

- Alongside local authorities, we will work with partners across health, justice and the third sector to support the co-design of RCCs to make lasting change. For health, every ICB will have an Executive Lead(s) responsible for Children and Young People, SEND and Safeguarding. They will be responsible for ensuring the ICB functions work in the interest of children and young people.

# Cont'd

- They will ensure join up with colleagues in children's social care. Every Joint Forward Plan is required to set out the steps to meet the particular needs for children and young people.
- Every integrated care strategy will set out how the integrated care system will meet the needs of its population, including children and young people. Working with health, local government and other partners, children's social care can play an important role in designing and implementing these plans and strategies. We will consider how connections can be made across ICBs and other stakeholders in the development of RCCs.

## Cont'd..

- We recognise the wide variety of views on how RCCs could operate, including those of local authorities, placement providers, foster carers and social workers.
- We will work with the sector to understand how RCCs should work and how they fit into wider plans to deliver sustainable and safe places to live for children in care, such as financial oversight of the independent sector. No matter where children are from, at the heart of this approach, it is crucial that children live close to their family, friends and school. A regional way of working should improve, not impede, this.
- We will be investing in two Pathfinders to test the model of RCCs with local authorities and how it can deliver better care for children and young people. We will collaborate with local authorities to trial an approach to make RCCs work within the current legal framework ahead of bringing forward legislation, when parliamentary time allows.

# Some other thoughts

- Existing consortia roughly the same as ADCS areas.? RCC the same.
- In each RCC footprint, there will be a myriad of existing contractual arrangements between local authorities and providers, so each RCC will need to consider if/how to continue to support these. For example, a RCC may require a local authority to apply to join an existing framework, or a new commissioning exercise may be designed to qualify both the local authority and providers that deliver good quality and value for money.
- Local authority social workers would be required to codesign referrals with those who know the child best, including independent provider social workers and/or carers. Social workers would be responsible for providing their RCC commissioning and placement hubs with information about a child's needs along with timescales and any specific conditions and requirements. The RCC would then seek placement options



# Some other thoughts...

- There would be greater focus on child-centred decision-making and ensuring there are arrangements in place for placement decisions to be independently scrutinised. Wherever possible, this scrutiny would take place before the placement is agreed. There would also be greater weighting given to the child's voice and, where more than one option is available, and where professionals believe any of these could meet the child's needs, the child should be given an opportunity to express their views
- Local authority placement budgets would transfer to the RCC. This could result in more children coming into care and protected effectively, as safeguarding would become the primary motivation and not any financial constraints facing the local authority

## Some other thoughts....

- Local authorities would be required to ensure there are appropriate and robust measures in place to ensure the type of placement sought is one that meets a child's assessed needs. At present, many local authorities apply a sequential sourcing process with those responsible for identifying placements having to (apparently) exhaust lower cost options before permission is given to search for the type of (higher cost) placement really needed. This approach is counterproductive as it prevents children's needs from being met quickly enough, leading to increased needs and risks at a later stage. In part this has led to an increased demand for higher cost services able to provide the levels of supervision to manage the risks that can result from not meeting needs earlier in a child's care journey. Removing sequential sourcing would release resources in the system as well as improve stability for children.

# Some other thoughts.....

- RCCs would be responsible for paying the fee identified in the procurement and contracting processes.
- RCCs would provide regular reports to a National Care Cooperative (NCC) which would collate and analyse information to inform a national overview. Whilst RCCs would remain responsible for commissioning services at local and regional level, the NCC would identify which specialist or rarely requested services are needed to support low numbers of children on a national basis. The NCC would commission these services, and provide the commissioning and placement hubs with information on how to access these specialist services under the terms agreed with NCC.
- By having national oversight, the NCC will be able to identify the RCC commissioning arrangements that work well. The removal of sequential sourcing arrangements will be critical to ensure the NCC is able to identify the services that need to be commissioned or decommissioned. The NCC would be responsible for reporting to DfE.

## Some other thoughts.....

- Consideration could be given to developing a new inspection framework for commissioning which would enable Ofsted to inspect RCCs. This would focus on how RCCs developed robust, theoretically informed and relational practice. There would be a requirement for RCCs to apply therapeutic standards and specifications that are demanding of all providers, but which also hold RCCs and corporate parents to account for the role they play. A programme of training would need to be established to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to undertake these inspections. ( *suggestion from fostering providers response* )

# Open discussion:

- Thoughts?
- Concerns?
- Ideas , questions to take forward to commissioners ?