



## **Sufficiency Statement**

### **Looked After Children Placements 2023**

#### **Placements, Contracts and Commissioning Team**

Parents want nothing but the best for their children. Bath and North East Somerset Council (B&NES) vision is that all children and young people will enjoy childhood and be well prepared for adult life. As corporate parents, B&NES strives to provide children and young people with the necessary care and support they need to thrive. B&NES aims to provide the right placement, at the right time, and in the right place for every looked after child, with the aspiration that all children and young people enjoy their childhood and are well prepared for adult life.

Under the Children Act 1989, Section 22G, the Sufficiency Duty mandates local authorities to ensure they have enough accommodation for children looked after, meet the needs of those children, and provide a range of accommodation through several providers. To fulfil this duty, local authorities must take steps to secure sufficient accommodation to improve outcomes for looked after children.

B&NES produced its Sufficiency Statement by analysing current demands on services for looked after children, B&NES trends, performance, and projected demand, involving key stakeholders, identifying areas of concern and pressure, and recommending associated actions for improvement.

B&NES recognise the importance of meeting the Sufficiency Duty to provide the necessary care and support for looked after children. By continuing to collaborate with providers and stakeholders, B&NES will strive to provide the best placements for children and young people, ensuring they have a bright future ahead of them.

## Executive Summary

B&NES requirements remain similar to previous years, however, increasing numbers and complexity add further stress to the system:

- Foster placements in central Bath and within a reasonable travelling distance of B&NES schools.
- Foster placements for children aged 14 – 17 years with complex and challenging needs including mental health and self-harm.
- Residential step-across to foster placements.
- Residential children's homes closer in B&NES.
- Appropriate placements for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC).
- Solo/specialist foster and residential placements for our most complex children.
- Parent and baby foster placements.
- 16+ accommodation and support placements in B&NES, registered with Ofsted.
- A higher requirement for placements for children and young people who identify as transgender or non-binary.

There has been increased pressure on the marketplace for children's placements, due to:

- Increased overall numbers of children in care regionally and nationally which adds pressure.
- Decrease in the number of fostering households, who have an aging demographic.
- 'Staying Put' legislation, allowing young people to stay in their foster placements.
- UASC children, who are 16/17-year-old males.
- A national shortage of children's home staff and carers. (One large provider has mothballed over one hundred beds and another has closed twenty-seven homes).
- Increased pressure on preventative or support services.

## **1. Introduction**

The landscape of children's placements in England is changing rapidly. According to recent studies, there is a lack of sufficiency of the right placements in the right places at the right time, this is across fostering, residential children's homes and residential parent and baby assessment unit. The only sector currently providing a sufficiency is: 16+ accommodation and support. Most Children Looked After in England live in foster care, but the UK is currently experiencing a crisis in relation to foster care provision, with demand for carers exceeding the number available. In the past 10 years, there has been a significant shift in the number of children in care and the number of placements open to them.

Placement officers and social workers face greater pressure to accept placements quickly due to the competitive marketplace. This pressure is caused by several factors, including a decrease in the number of fostering households, staying put legislation, a national dispersal scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) and a reduction in care staff within children's homes.

## **2. Commissioning Placements**

### **2.1 Commissioning principles**

- Support and maintain diversity of services to better meet the needs of children looked after.
- We secure the best possible care and accommodation for every child and young person, with consistent application of processes and standards across internal and external provision.
- We are clear (to providers) what excellent outcomes look like for each child and young person and explore incentives for achieving these.
- We provide young people with choice (where possible) about where they live.
- Commissioning priorities are based on the analysis of individual needs.
- We implement robust commissioning, contract and quality assurance processes and ensure that the same levels of monitoring and quality standards are applied.
- We work in partnership with other authorities and the market to maximise shared resources and economies of scale.
- Secure the right provision, at the right price, in the right place, whilst getting best value and protecting the public purse.

### **3. National and Independent Review of children's Social Care**

#### **3.1.1 The Need for Change**

The need for change in the children's social care system has become increasingly apparent as the number of children in care continues to rise. According to the latest figures, as of 31st March 2023, there were over 82,000 children looked after in England, which represents an increase of 10,000 children in the last five years.

#### **3.1.2 The Independent Review of Children's Social Care**

The Independent Review of Children's Social Care is a chance to take a fresh look at the system and make recommendations for real change. The review is looking at issues from the perspective of children and families throughout their interactions with children's social care, from initial contact to leaving care. To build the best possible recommendations, a wide range of views are being sought from stakeholders, experts, and those with lived experience.

The Case for Change, which is the review's early thinking about what needs to change in the children's social care system, has already been produced. It sets out the problems early, giving the opportunity for feedback and suggestions on any missed or misunderstood issues. B&NES was one of ten local authorities that contributed to the local design phase of the review.

#### **3.1.3 The CMA Review**

The Independent Review of Children's Social Care instructed the Competitions and Marketing Authority (CMA) to investigate the Children's Social Care Market. The CMA did not make a market investigation reference but did undertake a review. However, this should not be interpreted as the CMA finding no concerns in the sector.

Full report can be found here

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-social-care-market-study-final-report/final-report>

### **4. The National Picture**

The number of looked after children in England has been steadily increasing over the past few years. As of 31st March 2023, there were 80,850 looked after children nationally, compared to 72,670 in 2017. This increase highlights the urgent need for change in the children's social care system.

#### **4.1. Rise in teenagers**

25% of children that came into care in 2022 were aged 16+ (7,900), a rise of 38% on the previous year. This significant rise is attributed to the increase in the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children that entered the UK last year.

#### **4.2 Fostering**

**4.2.1** 70% of all children in care in England live with one of 43,905 registered foster families, a slight decline on a year earlier (71%). The proportion of children in foster care looked after by independent fostering agencies has increased by five percentage points since 2018 – from 40% of all filled fostering places to 45% in 2022. There is a shortage of foster carers both nationally and locally. The Fostering Network estimates that over 9,000 more foster carers are needed in the UK.

**4.2.2** The Social Market Foundation (SMF) predicts that by 2030, almost 77,000 children could be in foster care in England, up 33% compared to current numbers. To meet this demand, the number of approved foster care families would have to increase by 2.9% annually.

#### **4.2.3 As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023**

- Number of LA fostering households down by 5%
- The number of applications received from prospective fostering households in 2022 to 2023 was around 8,000. This is the lowest number in several years and is 18% lower than 2018 to 2019.
- There were around 72,800 approved mainstream fostering places.
- Since 2019, the number of vacant mainstream places has decreased by 25%. The most substantial decrease in vacant fostering places over this period has been in the LA sector, where the number has fallen by 29%.
- 12,000 vacancies
- 15,000 places not available.

**4.2.4** Child protection experts have called for an urgent nationwide hunt for thousands of new foster carers after a net loss of 1,000 families in the past year and a record number of children being placed far from home. (The Guardian, Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> December)

#### **4.3 Residential Children's Homes**

**4.3.1** The residential children's home sector in England remains diverse, with several smaller providers. However, there is an increasing consolidation of large organisations. Nationally, almost 6,000 looked after children were living in children's homes in England. While some local authorities continue to operate their own homes, the majority (70%) of places in homes are now in the private

sector. This is a significant part of local authority expenditure on children's services.

**4.3.2** Nationally, the total spend on residential children's homes has risen from £997.2m in 2012-13, with £616m of that being spent on private-sector provision, to £1,324 million in 2019-20, with £866m being spent on total private and £35m on voluntary provision.

**4.3.3** There are no residential children's homes in Banes. Previously there was one, but it has been closed as part of an organisation restructure by the Outcomes First Group.

**4.3.4** A Bristol based provider of 16+ accommodation and support, are planning to open an Ofsted registered children's home in Keynsham.

#### **4.4 Soaring Costs**

4.1 The number of children's care placements costing £10,000 or more per week has soared by more than 1,000%, a new survey has revealed.

The Local Government Association (LGA) found that the figure has increased from 120 in 2018-19, to 1,510 in 2022-23. (Martin Ford | 29 November 2023)

### **5. Closer to Home**

**5.1** In B&NES, there are just over 36,000 children and young people aged 0-19, which is 23% of the total population of 176,000. Males account for a slightly higher proportion of the younger population than females.

#### **5.2 Number of Children Looked After as of 31st March.**

<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
163	171	192	180	180	197	231

#### **5.3 Number of Children Placed with Independent Foster Agencies (IFA's) (Annual total)**

<b>16/17</b>	<b>17/18</b>	<b>18/19</b>	<b>19/20</b>	<b>20/21</b>	<b>21/22</b>	<b>22/23</b>
90	91	93	77	73	81	105

#### 5.4 Number of Children Placed in Residential Children's Homes

(Annual total)

16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23
4	11	13	24	27	23	31

#### 5.5 Number of Children Placed in 16+ Accommodation and Support (Annual total)

16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23
8	15	11	13	15	17	14

#### 5.6 Number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (Annual total)

16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23
N/A	N/A	8	8	4	12	43

### 6. Commissioning Arrangements

#### 6.1 South West Consortia Arrangements.

BANES are part of SW consortia of LA's who work together to commission preferred provider list in the form of Dynamic Purchasing Systems (DPS's). These are procurement vehicles for pre-qualifying providers. BANES have been part of these arrangements since 2005.

Inclusion in regional consortia arrangements for the commissioning of DPS's/Frameworks give us:

- Compliance with Public Contract regulations and procurement legislation.
- Ensures we are paying the same fees for placements as our larger LA neighbours.
- Fixed fees for the duration of the DPS, enabling better budget planning and avoiding annual fee increase negotiations which are time consuming and can lead to a break down in relationships.
- Avoids Banes having to complete the exercise. (Except where we lead and charge other LA's)
- Reduces costs on running tender, due to economies of scale.

## **6.2 Independent Fostering Agencies: 2022 – 26 (option to extend to 28)**

Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) led by Banes.  
South Glos, N Somerset, Gloucestershire.

## **6.3 Residential Children’s Homes: 2021 – 25 (option to extend to 27)**

DPS led by South Gloucestershire.  
B&NES, N Somerset, Gloucestershire, Bedford.

## **6.4 16+ Accommodation and Support: 2018- 2022 (2-year extension taken up 3,5,2024)**

DPS led by South Gloucestershire  
B&NES, Wiltshire, N Somerset, Gloucestershire.  
Due to go out to tender to be led by South Gloucestershire and to include several SW LA’s.

## **6.5 Parent and Baby Residential units: (2020–24)**

DPS led by Bristol.  
B&NES, South Gloucestershire  
Due to go out to tender led by Bristol. We await communication on this.

## **7. Market Sufficiency**

7.1 There is a lack of sufficiency in the marketplace due primarily to:

- Increasing number of Children Looked After (locally, regionally and nationally).
- Decreasing number of fostering households. (Leading to placing more children in RCH’s.
- Demographic of foster carers is an aging population.
- New foster carers in the system are leading to more placement breakdowns, creating churn.
- Staying Put legislation – allowing young people to remain in their foster placement up to the age of twenty-four, means there are fewer foster placements.
- Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children.
- RCH’s providers closing homes or mothballing homes for assorted reasons. Recruiting staff being the primary reason.



## **8. Joint Agency Panel.**

**8.1** The care of children with complex needs is financed through a tri-partite pooled budget, which is funded by Children's Social Care, Education, and Health. This funding model exemplifies excellent partnership and is overseen by the Joint Agency Panel (JAP). To qualify for JAP support, a child must meet at least two of the following three criteria:

- Have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan with needs that cannot be met by existing local provision, which may result in the child moving away from their community into residential care. An Educational Psychologist must be involved.
- Have an elevated risk of family or placement breakdown and/or assessed social care needs that indicate the need for residential care or demonstrate that the child's needs cannot be met solely by local services.
- Have significant assessed ongoing health needs, including severe emotional and behavioural issues that pose significant risks to school and/or family placement.

In recent years, the budget for this service has faced significant pressure. As shown in the table below, spending has increased year on year, with a notable spike in the 2019/20, when the number of children in the budget nearly doubled from the previous year.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Spend</b>
2015/16	£2.8 million
2016/17	£3.7 million
2017/18	£3.6 million
2018/19	£3.1 million
2019/20	£6.1 million
2020/21	£10.5 million
2021/22	£11.3 million
2022/23	£9.04 million

During the same period, the number of children in JAP and the number of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) has also increased steadily.

## **9. The Southwest Sufficiency Project (SWSP)**

## **9.1 Background**

**9.1.1** The sufficiency of placements for Local Authorities (LAs) has become a growing concern with the number of children entering care increasing nationally and regionally, budgets for LAs going down, and costs rising due to the nature and complexity of the children being placed. This has been funded by the South West Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) who have been working with the Department for Education (DFE) to address market sufficiency.

**9.1.2** In the Southwest, LAs have been working together for 20 years to implement framework agreements and more recently, Dynamic Purchasing Systems for independent fostering providers (IFP) and independent residential children's homes.

**9.1.3** While DPS is expected to continue to play a vital role in contributing to the sufficiency duty of the LA in the future, the changing nature of the placements market across in-house and the independent sector means that every LA needs to think differently by being smarter in the way it commissions independent placements and delivers its own in-services.

### **9.1.4 The Southwest Sufficiency Project aims to:**

- Create a complete system approach.
- Create new models for commissioning placements.
- Establish new ways of working, encouraging transparency and joint-up thinking across the Southwest.

**9.1.5** The project board is responsible for overseeing the project, ensuring that the project stays on track, supports decision-making, and appropriately explores risks and issues. The project consists of three working groups, each consisting of a Project Lead, Project Manager, Project Officer, representatives from each LA, and external providers, agencies, and charities.

**9.1.6** Moving forward a submission has been made to form a pathfinder as a Regional Care Cooperative. (RCC) which are designed to overcome the challenge of individual councils being too small – and having too few children – to be able to meaningfully shape the services providers offer and ensure that they meet need and are value for money.

## **10. Parent and child placements**

**10.1** Parent and child placements are typically court-ordered and take place in residential parent and baby units, which offer varying levels of support,

supervision, and surveillance. On average, there are around ten placements per year.

## **11. 16 + Accommodation and Support:**

**11.1** Post 16 placements provide support and accommodation but no care element, which involves "doing for" rather than supporting, such as cooking and administering medication. This differs significantly from residential children's homes. Support can range from a few hours a week to 24/7, and fees can vary accordingly.

**11.2** This marketplace growing significantly, resulting in a wide range of provision and quality of providers and support services. This market is undergoing oversight by Ofsted and providers are to be inspected in 2024. Previously to ensure all providers meet a minimum level, we have accredited a preferred provider list through a Dynamic Purchasing System, led by South Glos

**11.3** We have seen an increase in purchasing this type of provision, partly due to the shortage of other provision. Often, these children are not suitable matches for younger children in homes. These placements give us the option of commissioning a solo placement initially when this is considered the most suitable option.

**11.4** 16+ placements are a flexible alternative to traditional children's homes and enable young people to remain in their local areas as they approach adulthood.

**11.5** A recent audit of these placements identified the following strengths:

- A DPS Contract for Leaving Care/Independent Living Service is in place with preferred providers, outlining the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of all parties.
- The DPS Contract clearly defines the criteria for placement registration under the Care Standards Act 2000. Providers must ensure the support packages they deliver meet requirements in Annex A, preventing illegal unregulated care provision.
- B&NES chair quarterly South West Group meetings, where concerns about providers are shared and discussed.
- A report was presented to the Children, Adults, Health and Wellbeing Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel on March 10, 2020, outlining the current approach and oversight of children in care placed in unregulated provision, along with details of the agreed minimum practice standards to be operated.

- In November 2019, Ofsted reviewed arrangements for young people over 16 years and Care Leavers, stating: "the oversight of commissioned accommodation, including unregulated provision, is rigorous and results in additional support to keep young people safe."
- 16+ accommodation and support providers have been tendered through a dynamic purchasing system (DPS), in partnership with five other local authorities.
- Preferred providers have been subject to a rigorous tendering exercise with detailed checks conducted in terms of quality, policies, safeguarding, and financial status.

## **12. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC)**

**12.1** Banes have 31 UASC via The National Transfer Scheme. (As of October 20, 2023)

Afghan x13  
 Sudanese x 3  
 Egyptian x2  
 Iranian x6  
 Iraqi x3  
 Syrian x3  
 Kuwait-Bidoon x1

**12.2** Spontaneous arrivals - 4

Afghan x3  
 Sudanese x1

**12.3** Placing UASC within the boundaries of the local authority has been a challenge for B&NES, but this is not unique to UASC, as the same issue applies to the Looked After Children (LAC) population.

## **13. B&NES Fostering Team**

**13.1** The Family Placement Team (FPT) is the Local Authority's own 'in house' service responsible for the recruitment, training and support of foster carers.

**13.2** As of 20/02/2023 there were fifty-eight approved fostering households. There were 246 looked after children, of these seventy were in the Family Placement Team (including Family Link placements), making them the largest

provider of foster placements and delivering a greater number of placements than the independent agencies combined. There were seven vacancies available to use on that day.

**13.3** There have been two significant changes to the B&NES Family Placement Team in 2022-23:

- 1) FPT has introduced a new family finding and matching system, overseen by a Senior Practitioner. This means that an FPT worker is allocated to a child, provides support in the development of the placement request, and coordinates family finding searches.

The family finding and matching system has led to better quality, more child-centred work in searching for placements for children.

- 2) The Supported Lodgings scheme has transferred from the Housing Options Team to FPT. This has provided thirteen new placements for 16–25-year-olds. At the time of transfer, there were eight vacancies. FPT has made seven new matches since transfer. There are currently two vacancies within the Supported Lodgings scheme.

**13.4** FPT has a senior practitioner who leads on recruitment with the support of another social worker and a Marketing Officer. This involves advertising and marketing including on social media; responding to initial enquiries and the online questionnaire; and undertaking initial visits. They also liaise with “Home for Good”, who raise awareness in churches of the need for more fostering families to step forward. The senior practitioner for recruitment is currently seeking to build links with other organisations, particularly those who represent LGBTQ and Black and Minority Ethnic prospective foster carers.

**13.5** FPT is responsible for recruitment of respite, short-term and long-term foster carers, as well as those who provide short breaks for Disabled Children, Family Link carers.

**13.6** FPT is responsible for training, support and supervision of foster carers. It provides an out of hours service, and therapeutic parenting support via a Clinical Psychologist and Family Support Practitioners.

**13.7** Other work undertaken by FPT includes:

- 1) Viability and full kinship assessments for connected people who wish to provide care to a child. The demand for these assessments has steadily increased year on year, which mitigates some of the demand on the care system.

- 2) Support for kinship carers. There has been an increase year on year for requests for assessments and support plans.
- 3) Registering early permanence placements. Here, we support approved adopters as foster carers until a plan of adoption is approved. A lot of work that is undertaken within the team that is not strictly recruitment, assessment and support of foster carers, which makes comparison with IFAs difficult. This work includes:
  - 4) Private fostering assessments and monitoring.

## **14. Care Experienced Young Adults**

**14.1** We offer support to approximately 110 Care Experienced young adults aged 18-25, all of whom will have an allocated Personal Advisor to support them. We also offer an extended duty to approximately 90 care leavers aged 21-25 who have previously stepped down from having their Personal Advisor however, they are able to get back in touch whenever they may need advice, guidance and support as we recognise that there may be other points in their life that they may require additional support, this could be for short- or longer-term support. Each Care Experienced young person open to the team has a tailored Pathway Plan to identify their needs, goals and ambitions to ensure they are provided with the right support for them to achieve the best they can. The areas of focus for support are around identity, accommodation, education, employment and training, finance, health (including emotional health), developing skills for independence and relationships with important people.

**14.2** The needs of Care Experienced young adults vary hugely. We have Care Experienced young people at university, in full time employment and other forms of education and training and we have others that really struggle to maintain a level of stability and safety and who are impacted significantly by trauma and poor emotional and mental health. We have a small number of Care Experienced young people in custody, we support them in the same way whilst in prison, we ensure robust release plans are coordinated to give them the best chance to stay out of the criminal justice system when released. We also have several Care Experienced young adults who are at risk of criminal and sexual exploitation and require an elevated level of safeguarding intervention and we collaborate closely with adult safeguarding teams. We are supporting an increasing number of young people who have come to the country separated from their parents and are seeking asylum. We support them through this challenging time of uncertainty and focus on triple pathway planning to help them understand what may or may not happen at certain times based on the decisions the Home Office may make. The aim for all our Care Experienced young adults is to provide them with the care, love, safety and stability they require to function as best as they

can in society. We therefore work closely with adult care services, health, housing, prisons and the police to ensure all the young person's needs are met.

## **15. Pathways Service**

**15.1** Pathways provides fifteen units of accommodation to vulnerable 16-19-year-olds with high support needs and are staffed 24 hours a day. Staffing is:

- Monday, Wednesday and Friday: 8am – 6pm
- Tuesday and Thursday: 8am – 9pm
- Saturday and Sunday: 9am – 5pm
- 4 hours support on Bank Holidays only.

**15.2** Outside these times service users have access to a concierge service which operates overnight, starting when day staff leave at 6pm and finishing after 5am, 7 days a week. Concierge staff are on hand to respond to any urgent enquiries and address any project rule breaches. They are trained on safeguarding but do not conduct any support work. They keep a log of occurrences every evening and weekend and follow up with staff when they arrive on site in the morning. Any breaches of project rules are escalated to management and followed up with the team on the same day.

## **16. Young Parents' Service**

Curo Young Parents' Service provides six self-contained flats in Bath for young parents aged 16-21 with low support needs.

## **17. Banes Children's Transformation Programme**

**17.1** As part of the B&NES Children's Transformation Programme we have created projects with an aim to reduce the number of out of area placements and create local offers.

Projects include:

- Foster Care Campaign – a 12-month project focused on increasing the awareness and applications to become foster carers within B&NES. This was delivered by a commissioned marketing company and has enabled 108 assessments and during the campaign period a total of seventeen successful applications (this continues to grow). Alongside creating a local offer, this project is expected to generate savings of £144,972 for 2022-23.
- Increasing the availability of Family Group Conferences – investment was made to enable recruitment to expand the FGC offerings, the process is supported by an independent coordinator who helps the family prepare for

the family group conference. Children are usually involved in their own family group conference, often with support from an advocate. It is a voluntary process. In year reporting is showing an increase of over 100% in terms of the amounts of conferences. This provides a whole family approach of support.

- There is ongoing work to support reunification within the service and we are seeing an increase of successful reunifications which is anticipated to generate in year savings of £334,000. Whilst the savings are important to note, it is essential to acknowledge the work between practitioners and families to enable reunification.

Monitoring and governance of these and other projects are tracked through the Transformation Programme. Monthly meetings. Working to standardise data and reporting across the service, delivering saving targets and created a model of delivery to support continuous improvements.

## **18. Workforce Development**

18.1 The Workforce Development plays an essential role in improving services and developing social workers' skills to provide better care for children and families. Their contributions include:

- Co-facilitating training sessions with the Principal Social Worker to improve social workers' skills in completing placement requests.
- Conducting continuous induction sessions for new social workers, which includes information on the cost of placements, and incentivises exploring all other options before placing a child out of the family.
- Attending team meetings to discuss placements and the fiscal cost to B&NES, ensuring social workers are aware of the cost schedule of the contract, and what is included in the weekly price.
- Ensuring social workers do not agree to payments for items or services already included in the fee. • Time-limiting support packages with review and requiring agencies to provide evidence that the support is still necessary.
- Sitting on children's Care and Resource panel to oversee all children coming into care on Section 20.
- Working with the Head of Service to provide oversight of all 16+ placements.
- Advising the JAP Panel on the most complex and costly placements.
- Working closely with the Head of Service and social work teams to manage the needs of children placed with agencies or residential homes with RI/Inadequate OFSTED ratings after placement.



## **19. Quality Assurance and Contract Monitoring**

To maintain the highest level of quality, the Placement Commissioning and Contract Team (PCCT) conducts the following:

- Contractual compliance visits to providers.
- End-of-placement reviews.
- Annual contract meetings.
- Annual Safeguarding audit.
- Collection of OFSTED reports for current providers.
- Additional quality assurance of children's placement requests.
- Joint commissioning on behalf of the Joint Agency Panel (children's pooled budget).
- Promoting sufficiency by working with and advising providers.

## **20. Key Priorities 2023/2024**

- The PCCT will continue to provide a core service in supporting social care teams; searching for placements, appraising offers made, negotiating costs with agencies, drawing up and then monitoring contracts. Each stage is considered thoroughly, alongside the placing social worker, leading to successful, stable placements and good outcomes for children and young people.
- Tendering for 16+ accommodations and Support DPS.
- Continue to chair the Southwest Children's Services 'Placements, Contracts and Commissioning Group' to increase our range of placements from external providers and opportunities to develop the provider markets.
- Ongoing work on the DPS Framework for 16 – 24 age accommodation and
- Monitor any regulatory changes to the 16+ accommodation and support marketplace and respond accordingly.

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