



To: Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)

Date: 17th September 2026

Cabinet Portfolio: Children and Young People

Subject: The Complexities Involved in Finding Homes for Children in Care and Associated Costs

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 This paper provides an update following the items considered by the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) on 28th November 2024, and 11th September 2025 outlining ongoing challenges in the children's social care market, recent national developments, and local authority responses.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) are recommended:
- 1) To note progress in relation to sufficiency, in line with significant national social care reforms.
 - 2) To formally acknowledge Coventry City Council's continued support to the 14 local authorities in the West Midlands by managing the West Midlands Commissioning Hub (WMCH) & leading on the Regional Frameworks for both Fostering and Residential homes. In addition, Coventry is leading on the Regional Residential workforce strategy.
 - 3) Note progress linked to Regional Fostering Hubs and the establishment of the West Midlands Regional Care Cooperative.

3 National & Regional Context

- 3.1 As previously reported, there has been a marked increase in the number of children and young people in care that local authorities have struggled to find appropriate homes for.
- 3.2 The Children's Commissioner reported that as of 1st September 2025, 669 children were reported to be living in an unregistered children's home in England. This continues to be a widely reported national issue and is a consequence of several interlinked factors, which were highlighted in Competition and Market's Authority report of March 2022, the Independent Review of Children's Social care of May

2022, Stable Homes, Built on Love (February 2023) and the Parliamentary Committee for Public Accounts in January (2026).¹

- 3.3 Subsequently there are significant reforms in social care and in summary the key areas include:
- 3.4 **Family Help & Safeguarding:** Local authorities are rolling out unified Family Help services alongside multi-agency child protection teams uniting police, health, and education to intervene earlier.
- 3.5 **Placement & Cooperatives:** Regional Care Cooperatives (RCCs) are expanding to jointly plan and improve the sufficiency of children's homes and foster care placements.
- 3.6 **Kinship & Sibling Support:** Councils must publish a local kinship offer backed by national standards, and legal duties now mandate promoting sibling contact in care.
- 3.7 **Ofsted and Regulation Changes:** Ofsted gains powers to issue direct financial penalties for running unregistered homes, while inspections move away from single-word overall effectiveness judgments.
- 3.8 **Workforce & Care Leavers:** New early career and post-qualification standards for social workers are taking effect, supported by expanded long-term 'Staying Close' frameworks for care leavers.
- 3.9 In summary, the Government is reported to be investing £2.4 billion for the Families First Partnership Programme, £245 million to deliver legislative commitments and improve the care market, and £56 million in capital funding to expand and refurbish children's homes.
- 3.9 There is national recognition that the children's 'placement' market is broken, there has been a significant decline in the number of available foster carers since 2021. At the same time, the children's homes sector continues to expand, with Ofsted reporting a 20% increase in the number of children's homes during 2025/26 and an overall 70% increase in new children's homes since March 2022. However, this growth has not translated into a proportional increase in placement capacity, as newly registered homes are typically smaller, with an average capacity of three children per home, compared to four children in existing homes. These market pressures continue to present challenges for local authorities in securing sufficient local homes for children in care
- 3.10 Research has identified that these problems break down into two main areas and the government has begun to take steps to address these within the Social Care & Education reforms. As reported previously, the two main areas were identified as:
 1. *A lack of placements of the right kind in the right place, thereby increasing risk of unregulated placements with providers making materially higher profits and charging significantly higher prices than if the market were functioning effectively.*
 2. *A concern of the high level of debt some providers have and the impact if they exited the market as this would further exacerbate sufficiency and the ability of local authorities to meet the needs of these children.*

¹ [Financial sustainability of children's care homes](#)

- 3.11 In *Keeping Children Safe*, the government referenced the need to “bring a swift end to excessive and exploitative profit making in a sector which supports our most vulnerable children”.
- 3.12 There continues to be a drive to create regional solutions through the establishment of Regional Care Co-operatives (RCC). supporting local authorities in challenging profiteering providers “as well as enabling greater central government oversight of the placements market” ²
- 3.13 Around 11,560 children and young people are currently in care across the West Midlands. In July 2026, the Department for Education (DfE) awarded up to £680,000 in 2026/27 and £1.026million in 2027/28 to create a new West Midlands Regional Care Cooperative (RCC). Sandwell are the lead authority, working with the DfE on the development and mobilisation of the West Midlands RCC, on behalf of the 14 LA’s/Trusts.
- 3.14 The new partnership will bring together the 14 councils across the wider West Midlands region, as well as health services, police and youth justice partners, who will work together to make sure children and young people get the support they need, when they need it.
- 3.15 The RCC aims to improve placement sufficiency, increase placement stability, strengthen regional commissioning and improve outcomes for children and young people. An interim Director for the RCC has been appointed and work is continuing across the region to develop a regional sufficiency strategy and action plan.
- 3.16 [The Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Act \(2026\)](#) references a financial oversight regime for providers who meet conditions to be set out in regulations; linked to the size of the provider and whether it would be difficult to replace were it to fail. The aim is to ensure that these providers submit a “recovery and resolution plan”, setting out risks to their financial sustainability and actions they propose to take in response.
- 3.17 In addition, the National Audit Office (NAO) published a review of the Department for Education’s oversight of the children’s homes sector, including supported accommodation, highlighting a 96% rise in local authority residential care expenditure between 2019/20 and 2023/24, with costs increasing to £3.1 billion over the period. In the West Midlands, approximately £1billion is spent collectively on children’s social care annually, with just under half of this spend linked to residential children’s care.
- 3.18 The Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting & Sufficiency, alongside colleagues from finance have contributed to the Children’s social care market interventions working group with the DfE.
- 3.19 The Government have also identified an additional £52m to support the capital funding (50%) to increase the number of local authority run Childrens homes (July

² <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/publication/performance-tracker-local/childrens-social-care-market/recommendations>

2025).³ which is specifically aimed at creating up to 200 new placements in council-run children's homes for children with complex needs.⁴

- 3.20 The Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting & Sufficiency is part of the DfE working group on reforms linked to Childrens Residential Care. Recent research has been published linked to findings from a workforce census and discussions have taken place this summer, with an expert led panel on the development of a national workforce strategy. The initial report with proposed outcomes will be published in the Autumn.
- 3.21 Coventry, with the Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting and Sufficiency as chair, leads and contributes to regional workforce initiatives across the West Midlands to address ongoing recruitment and retention challenges within residential childcare.
- 3.22 Regional analysis has identified shortages of experienced residential workers and Registered Managers, increasing competition from the private sector, and delays in Ofsted registration processes as key risks to sufficiency. In response, local authorities are working together and sharing ideas to develop recruitment campaigns, training pathways, university partnerships, leadership development opportunities and peer support networks for Registered Managers.
- 3.23 As part of this, Coventry also led the delivery of the West Midlands 'Big Thinking' Residential Workforce Event in June 2026, bringing together local authorities, Registered Managers, universities and Health partners to explore workforce challenges, career pathways, therapeutic practice and innovation within residential childcare. This collaborative approach aims to improve workforce resilience, supporting the growing number of LA children's homes across the region, and ensure children continue to receive high-quality care from a skilled and experienced workforce.
- 3.24 Ofsted are considering changes to regulations including 'location impact risk assessments' to ensure that new children's homes are being opened in the right places to meet need and only following collaborative work and agreement with the local authority in which they plan to situate the home. In addition, consideration is being given to sufficiency becoming a Children's Services judgement in full inspections, under the ILACS framework.
- 3.25 Coventry City Council have established a process whereby Childrens services are now consulted on all planning applications for a 'change in use' form C3 to C2, where a provider wishes to open a new home in an existing property. Each application is considered based upon additional evidence the provider is now required to submit, linked to opening a children's home. Consideration is given to Coventry's sufficiency needs for new homes and expectation that any new homes will be for Coventry's children. Discussions are being held across the region to address the challenges all local authorities are facing in relation to the opening of new private homes, sufficiency and the impact of out of area 'children' coming into the region.
- 3.26 In addition to residential children's homes, Regional Fostering Recruitment hubs are being established to enable local authorities to work together to recruit new foster carers and improve retention, supported by £25m in DfE funding. There has been an expansion of the expectations of the Fostering hubs, now requiring a

[Government announces £53 million for council-run children's homes | Social Work Today](#)

⁴ <https://www.ccinform.co.uk/practice-guidance/childrens-social-care-reforms/>

minimum of 4 LA's/ Trusts to come together to not only recruit but also assess and train new foster carers.

3.27 In summary the new proposals for 'End to End Fostering Hubs' (Published March 2026) aims to: ⁵

- launch a national communications campaign to attract potential foster carers and provide clear guidance on the system and applications process
- speed up the foster carer recruitment process and work with local areas to improve monitoring of that process
- pilot an enhanced training and support offer for foster carers and from 2027 provide up to £25m (in cash terms) in capital funding over two years to help local authority foster carers create additional space in their homes.

3.28 The WM authorities have successfully submitted a Room Makers bid via the Black County Fostering Hub, to access addition funding to support foster carers to have their properties developed to create additional bedrooms. In addition, a DfE Expression of interest has been submitted, in partnership with health for Home Again funding- to support children to exit Tier 4 hospital provisions and prevention of admissions.

3.29 As part of this wider regional approach, West Midlands local authorities are also working together to establish a Regional Safe Centre in Birmingham, supported by the Department for Education. The Safe Centre will provide secure welfare provision for children with the most complex needs where foster care, kinship care or residential provision cannot safely meet their needs.

3.30 Cabinet approval on 4 November 2025 confirmed Coventry City Council's commitment and support for this regional development, which aims to increase specialist provision, reduce reliance on limited national secure welfare provision, and enable children from the West Midlands to be cared for closer to home wherever possible

4 Sufficiency in Coventry

4.1 Following the March 2026 inspection of Coventry's Childrens Services judged as Outstanding, Ofsted stated '*As committed corporate parents, leaders have ensured sufficient provision for children in care. This means that more children can live locally and remain in the communities and schools they know, cared for by skilled and dedicated carers.*' ⁶

4.2 Ofsted also stated: *Leaders recognise the importance of children living close to home and in communities they identify with. As a result of targeted work to increase sufficiency, there is now a wider range of placements available when children cannot remain living at home. This is also leading to greater placement stability for children in care. No children in care currently live in unregistered care provision*

⁵

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/69c407bdb66ff902f45441d9/Fostering_Recruitment_and_Retention_Programme_end-to-end_programme_booklet.pdf

⁶ <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50301676>

- 4.3 The Coventry practice model 'Family Valued', works on the premise of keeping children and families together when it is safe to do so. This approach seeks to enable families to find the solutions to challenges they face. Families are supported through Family Network Meetings and Family Group Conferences (FGC) and additional support to identify family led solutions. This approach aligns with the government 'keeping children safe, helping families thrive' principles.⁷
- 4.4 In February 2026, the number of children in care reached its lowest point during the last year at 683. Since then, the service has experienced a steady increase, with 731 children in care as of August 2026.
- 4.5 Whilst fluctuations are expected throughout the year, the increase observed since February is greater than in previous years and reflects the growing demand and complexity being experienced across children's social care. Initial analysis suggests that a contributing factor has been an increase in the number of large sibling groups entering care and Assistant Directors continue to review and approve all new entrants to care.
- 4.6 Further analysis is being undertaken to understand the key drivers behind this increase and to identify opportunities to safely reduce demand, reunify children wherever possible and improve outcomes for children and families.
- 4.7 Family-led solutions, including kinship arrangements with connected carers, are considered when a child cannot safely remain with their parents. Kinship care has seen notable growth in Coventry, with 146 children in September 2026 now placed in kinship foster care representing 19.8% of children in care.
- 4.8 If no suitable family or kinship carers can be identified and the child requires safeguarding and care by the local authority, the process of finding an appropriate alternative home will begin. In most cases, a foster placement is sought initially, allowing the child to receive care and support within a family setting either through Coventry Fostering Service or an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA), who are ideally on the fostering framework.
- 4.9 As of 5th September 2026, just under 73% of Coventry's children in care were living with foster families, including kinship foster carers. Nationally, fostering remains the most common placement type, with an average of 67% of children in care living in foster care in 2025.
- 4.10 1.9% of our children in care are placed for adoption, 4.3% placed with parents and 9.7% are living in supported accommodation.
- 4.11 However, for some children, the complexity of their needs means that a residential children's home is the most appropriate care plan. Wherever possible, children will live within Coventry's own internal children's homes or through contracted providers on the residential framework, as close to their communities as possible. Only where these arrangements are unable to meet a child's needs will the service access the wider residential care market to secure an appropriate home.
- 4.12 11% of Coventry's children in care live within a children's home and this figure has remained reasonably stable over the last 12 months, whilst the number of children in care has increased over the last 12 months.

7

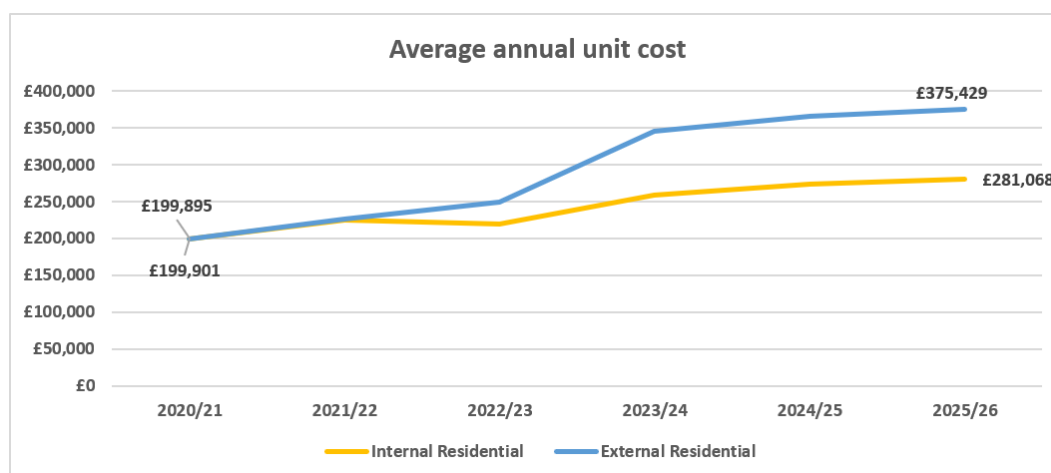
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/69c407bdb66ff902f45441d9/Fostering_Recruitment_and_Retention_Programme_end-to-end_programme_booklet.pdf

- 4.13 The challenge of securing the right home in the right location is often intensified by the urgency with which homes must be found. Some children enter care under a Police Protection Order, are remanded to local authority care, or require immediate relocation due to incidents involving physical or perceived aggressive behaviour or due to significant safeguarding concerns. In some cases, carers both foster and residential, may give very limited notice, sometimes on the same day. Within an already pressured market and considering the factors previously outlined, finding a suitable new home immediately is not always possible. Children's Services consistently work to resist immediate or short-notice endings, dedicating significant daily resources to engaging with providers to stabilise homes.
- 4.14 Weekly stability meetings are held to explore additional support options that may help maintain stability for children at risk of needing to move. This often involves securing extra funding, which some providers may need, to continue to care for the child, stating that without it, the child will need to be relocated.
- 4.15 When a child must move from a children's home and another residential provider offers a home, the associated costs can be high. Providers may seek to mitigate perceived risks by increasing fees, often basing their offer on the need for additional staffing or by charging for 2 spaces in the home (double funding).
- 4.16 For children who experience sudden moves, the impact on their emotional wellbeing can be significant, affecting their self-esteem, sense of self-worth, and their ability or willingness to form attachments with new carers. These children may assume that new carers will also give up on them at the first sign of difficulty, which can perpetuate a cycle of instability. This, in turn, can reinforce providers' justification for maintaining high levels of support and costs, as children respond to psychological trauma through 'fight, flight, or freeze' behaviours.
- 4.17 Both the increase in the number of 'out of hours' foster carers and the opening of our 'short stay, same day' children's home, which has supported 15 children (including sibling groups), has evidenced impact on our ability to address some of these challenges. There have been no children placed in an unregulated children's home or with an unregulated provider by Coventry for over a year.
- 4.18 As of March 2026, just under 74% of children who have been in care for over 2 years, under the age of 16, were experiencing 'home' stability, against a national average of 69%.
- 4.19 In addition, a 2025 report published by the charity 'Become' highlighted that delivering sufficiency remains a national challenge, with the number of children in care living more than 20 miles from home increasing by two-thirds since 2013. The report identified that local authorities achieving the strongest sufficiency outcomes were those investing in early help, kinship care, foster carer recruitment and retention, local residential provision, and stronger relationships with providers. The report highlighted and recognised Coventry's Family Valued approach as a positive exemplar of practice that has helped reduce the number of children entering care and our increased use of kinship arrangements, supporting more children to remain connected to their families and communities, living closer to Coventry.⁸

⁸ https://becomecharity.org.uk/content/uploads/2025/11/Good-practice-report-by-Become-2025.pdf?utm_source=Button&utm_medium=Website&utm_campaign=Full+report&utm_content=Read+the+report

5 Financial context

- 5.1 The challenge for Coventry is that the average unit cost of a home for a child in care has been sharply increasing from year to year, high costs provision feature across the region, confirming demand outstripped availability of the right home in the right place to meet children's needs.



- 5.2 Although there are residential homes within the local market and Coventry is considering further homes, it still remains extremely difficult to find homes for our most complex children who exhibit significant trauma linked behaviours and often have additional needs such as autism.
- 5.3 External Residential costs have almost doubled over the last 5 years with the current 10 highest cost packages of care accounting for 42% of the total external residential budget.
- 5.4 As reported by the County Councils' Network & IMPOWER in November 2024: *Councils are faced with unenviable choices when needing to place a child taken into care at short notice – they cannot just be left homeless until a suitable price can be negotiated for their care'*

6 Mitigating activity

- 6.1 **The Sufficiency Steering Group**, alongside the Children's Commissioning Team carry out needs analysis into the issues to inform potential commissioning solutions. Several existing projects, alongside new initiatives seek to address the challenges of the 'placement mix'.
- 6.2 **The placement mix** is tracked throughout the year and reported monthly on a finance scorecard. To project future movements in the mix, input is gathered from across children's services covering:
- Expected changes in the overall number of children in care
 - Growth of internal provision
 - Impact of other projects, including House Project, Reunification,
- 6.3 Once compiled, the placement mix is modelled across the next financial year along with the anticipated unit costs to create expected budgets.
- 6.4 Actuals versus projections are reviewed regularly including at the monthly Sufficiency Steering Group Meeting. In addition, expected delivery against budgets

is scrutinised as part of Coventry's quarterly budgetary control process, Children's Services Leadership Team monthly business meeting and regular meetings between colleagues from finance and children's services.

- 6.5 The use of the 'Valuing Care' tool also supports Coventry's ambition to increase the use of local homes and foster placements, reduce reliance on high-cost external provision, and ensure that placement decisions are informed by a clear understanding of need rather than service availability alone. Ongoing review of children's changing needs, enables professionals to consider planned moves for children to foster homes or ways in which to support them further towards independence, as appropriate. This aligns with wider sufficiency and value-for-money objectives.
- 6.6 **The Fostering Excellence programme** aims to build on the growth in the number of carers supporting Coventry's children—whether through kinship care, mainstream fostering, or Next Steps arrangements. It enhances the support available to carers to promote stability and permanence wherever possible. Notably, the service has successfully increased the number of emergency foster carers, who now operate on a rota system to provide immediate care for children entering care in crisis.
- 6.7 Targeted recruitment activity continues, aligned to the specific types of homes needed—such as parent and child arrangements—and includes postcode-based recruitment in areas with larger properties that may be suitable for sibling groups.
- 6.8 Coventry has strengthened its Kinship Strategy and Local Offer. This now includes access to therapeutic support and a wider range of resources for all carers, aimed at encouraging and supporting potential kinship carers through both fostering and Special Guardianship Order (SGO) pathways.
- 6.9 Discussions are ongoing with neighbouring local authorities regarding the development of a regional fostering hub. Although initial work began in 2025, the Department for Education's funding criteria, and the scope of the hub's role was changed in March 2026 and therefore work has recommenced against new criteria and ambition.
- 6.10 **Next Step foster carers.** The Next Steps fostering scheme offers a supportive, safe, and nurturing family environment for children with more complex needs who step across from a children's home or are on the cusp of entering residential care. This continues to show success in significantly improving outcomes for the children placed with Next Steps carers alongside delivering tangible cost saving / avoidance, however we continue to target recruitment for experienced carers to increase the number of children who could move to a fostering family.
- 6.11 **Coventry's Residential Strategy (2023–2026).** Coventry's Residential Strategy continues to respond to increasing demand and the growing complexity of children's needs. The Council currently operates seven internal children's homes, with two further homes refurbished and awaiting Ofsted registration.
- 6.12 Once open, these smaller homes will increase local sufficiency and reduce reliance on high-cost external placements for children with complex needs.
- 6.13 Workforce recruitment remains a key challenge, particularly in relation to experienced residential childcare workers and Registered Managers, which can affect the pace at which new homes become operational. However, Coventry continues to maintain an active recruitment campaign and contribute to regional

workforce development across the West Midlands. Early impact from local investment is evident through 'short stay, same day' children's home, which has supported 15 young people in crisis, helped keep sibling groups together where appropriate, reduced reliance on unregistered provision, and contributed to an estimated £1 million in annual cost avoidance, in the first weeks 16 weeks of operation. The Council will continue to review its residential strategy to ensure the right number and type of homes, supported by a skilled workforce, are aligned to children's changing needs.

- 6.14 **House Project & Staying Close**, plans are in place to increase the number of cohorts accessing this. The new cohort has just begun and 97 young people now having been successfully supported by the House Project and 35 through Staying Close which also includes Lifelong Links.
- 6.15 The House Project is registered by Coventry as a Supported Accommodation provider and are awaiting their first Ofsted inspection.
- 6.16 Several children from children's homes have successfully moved onto their own home through the House Project and receive ongoing support through "Staying Close", from their former carers and through Lifelong links networks. The Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting and Sufficiency alongside the Operational Lead for Residential Children's Homes are part of the Core Working Group for Staying Close Statutory Guidance development with the DfE.
- 6.17 **Reunification project:** Since the launch of the Reunification Project in June 2021, over 60 children have returned to the care of their parent(s) through this project, with further children, young people and their families working towards reunification.
- 6.18 **Supported Accommodation** is mainly provided to our children who are preparing to leave care though block contracts specifically commissioned though Coventry. Our block contracts have been effective in reducing spend, when comparing costs associated with the current regional supported accommodation framework. The assessment of need to determine if it is suitable for a child to move to supported accommodation, must be approved by an Assistant Director.
- 6.19 We are currently retendering our supported accommodation framework.
- 6.20 **Regional contracts:** Working in partnership with the West Midlands Commissioning Hub and local authorities across the region, Coventry supported the implementation of a Regional Fostering Framework in September 2024. The framework includes 58 Independent Fostering Agencies and is designed to improve quality, strengthen cost control and support more consistent access to foster homes across the region.
- 6.21 The framework aims to reduce the impact of shortages, particularly for sibling groups, older children, children with disabilities and children with more complex needs. It also supports regional collaboration in response to the wider recruitment and retention challenges affecting foster care, helping to improve sufficiency and enabling more children to live closer to their families, schools and communities wherever possible.
- 6.22 The Regional Residential Framework, which implemented in 2025/26 includes 107 providers, seeks to reduce reliance on spot purchasing by providing agreed fee structures, greater cost certainty and stronger regional quality assurance arrangements. This improves Coventry's ability to access suitable residential homes, achieve better value for money, and respond more effectively to national

demand, which continues to exceed supply for children with complex needs, disabilities, significant mental health needs and those subject to Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards.

- 6.23 Coventry remains the lead authority for both regional frameworks on behalf of the West Midlands, working closely with the Commissioning Hub, local authorities, legal and procurement colleagues as part of a One Coventry approach. The Commissioning Team also works collaboratively with regional partners to undertake provider checks, quality assurance visits and ongoing liaison with social workers to ensure children receive safe, good quality care
- 6.24 **Regional Safe Centre.** Local Authorities from the West Midlands are working with the DfE to open a new West Midlands Safe Centre (secure welfare) children's home. There is a national shortage of secure welfare provision. The home will care for up to 20 children and is expected to open in the latter part of 2028. Birmingham Children's Trust are leading on the development, and the Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting & Sufficiency is part of the 'Practice & Operating Model' working group.
- 6.25 **Assistant Director oversight** includes the weekly Gateway Panel, Resource & Stability Panels and bi-monthly Residential Review. All new entrants to care are approved by an Assistant Director.
- 6.26 A bimonthly review is undertaken of all children living in residential care, to consider a move on, in line with their care plan. Alongside this, children in residential care with additional packages of support are reviewed weekly. This meeting actively tracks each resource with additional support and works with social workers and providers to reduce the package in line with need.
- 6.27 **Unit cost inflation:** The outturn (end of year) position is analysed each year to determine the unit cost of different types of provision, including contract type e.g., framework, block or spot. Work is then undertaken to determine contractually expected uplifts or to estimate non-contractual increases. This involves looking at historical uplift trends and consideration of national inflationary rates, including CPIH and National Living Wage. This supports ongoing budget forecasting.
- 6.28 It is of note that the placement spend for 2025-2026 was within budget.

7 Joint working with Health.

- 7.1 Joint Health funding is provided for those children who are discharged from hospital, having been sectioned under S2 of the Mental Health Act, under s.117 and for some children with complex needs. However, there are ongoing discussions with health regarding differing views as to whether several children should receive additional funding support through Children's Continuing Health Care (CCHC) assessment outcomes. A complex needs panel meets monthly to consider funding 'splits' for children with the most complex needs- including the ICB, Children's and Education service.
- 7.2 With effect from September 2026, CAMHS provision will be co-located with children's services at Friargate. In addition, Coventry are one of 5 local authority pilots receiving a dedicated Toucan (CAMHS Regional Collaborative) Case Manager to work with and to support professionals and carers to respond earlier to emerging mental health and emotional well being concerns for our children in care.

7.3 The West Midlands have also submitted a bid to work with the DfE & health partners on Home Again.⁹

8 Summary & Conclusion:

- 8.1 As evidenced, the primary budgetary pressures stem from the instability within the residential children's homes market. Coventry Children's Services is leading the way regionally in supporting the development of local authority-run children's homes, with seven homes currently operational and two additional homes scheduled to open following Ofsted registration
- 8.2 A range of local workstreams in line with the reforms remain in place to ensure that children are supported in the most appropriate homes for their needs. This includes strengthening kinship care, fostering, Next Steps foster care, reunification, the House Project, Staying Close, Valuing Care and residential review processes.
- 8.3 It is noteworthy that many of the recommendations outlined in the May 2025 LGA publication, 'Costs and Complexity in Care: The Real Drivers of High-Cost Placements for Children in Care', are either already in place or have been identified as active workstreams through Coventry's Sufficiency Steering Group.
- 8.4 Collaborative efforts across the Council, Children's Services, and regional partners continue to focus on reducing the costs associated with children entering or remaining in care, and on supporting safe reunification with families wherever possible.

Angela Whitrick
Assistant Director Corporate Parenting & Sufficiency
Children's Services.
angela.whitrick@coventry.gov.uk

Co Author
Farai Kanengoni
Operational Lead- Home Finding & Sufficiency.

9

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6a4cb31de50f952c9b89e646/Home_Again_application_guidance_for_regional_care_cooperatives_and_partners.pdf