

# **Children's Services**

## **Looked After Children**

### **Sufficiency Strategy**

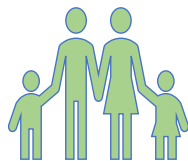
#### **2022-2025**



# Introduction



Intends to give providers vital information to inform business plans as well as those organisations that are interested in developing new services in Bolton.



Gives Bolton's position on the care of looked after children.  
It will help identify what the future demand for care and will form a starting point for identifying what care services might be provided in the Borough.



Has been developed in partnership with service providers and code design will be a key feature of how we iterate the information so we can seek to maintain a sustainable, vibrant and agile children's care sector.



Shows the clear intent to raise our ambition for the children we look after.



Aligns with the Bolton Vision and Children's Plan, its theme around Start Well and the partnership of Council, GM Integrated Commissioning Board, Bolton Community Homes, Bolton Hospital Trust, Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust, Voluntary and Community Sector and Providers.

# Our Sufficiency Ambition for Looked After Children

In Bolton, we want to give our children the best possible start in life, so that they have every chance to succeed and be happy. We also want to provide the best opportunities for children in care, leaving care, children who are vulnerable and identify the key challenges that we face in achieving sufficiency and our strategic approach to overcoming them.

Through effective partnership working we will work together involving children and young people in the decisions affecting their lives.

**Our Sufficiency aim is to ensure that if a child needs to be accommodated by us, that we will ensure that Fostering, Residential and Semi-Independent Living Placement options are available as close to home as possible.**

Our priorities are:

- To Jointly commission between social care, education and health which will focus on outcomes including Early Help and Prevention
- To collaborate, work jointly, and responsibly
- To engage the wider community by utilising the voluntary sector

Ensuring the Sufficiency Duty is met, requires the Bolton Local Authority to ensure that, through either direct provision or commissioned services, a range of placements sufficient to meet the needs of all children in care are available locally within the region. Where that is not currently the case, the duty requires that there be a plan in place to rectify that sufficiency shortfall.

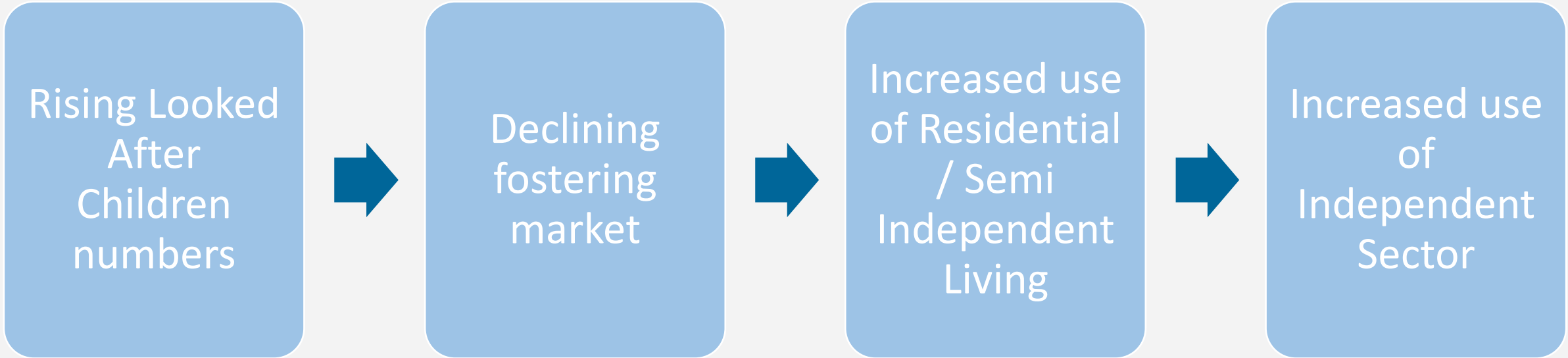
In 2010, Statutory Guidance was issued on the implementation of Section 22G of the Children Act 1989 that is referred to as the Sufficiency Duty: [Children Act 1989 Link](#)

This Strategy should be read in conjunction with Bolton's Looked After Children Permanence Strategy ([link](#)).

# Market Context

The Sufficiency Trend is driven by a growth in demand that has pushed foster care capacity to the very limit, exacerbated by the fact that the market has declined in size.

This has led to increased use of Residential and Semi Independent Living placements instead of foster care. As the majority of Residential and Semi Independent Living provision is not delivered in-house, this has therefore prompted a significant increased use of the independent sector.



77% of all of our Looked After Children placements are made inside Greater Manchester

however

Only 31% of all independent residential / fostering/Semi Independent Living placements are made within the host Council area

# Bolton - Our vision for all age integration



**Start  
Well**

**Live  
Well**

**Age  
Well**

# Bolton Strategic Context

## Bolton Vision 2030 [\(click here for more information\)](#):

*The people of Bolton will be involved in their own health and wellbeing with the aim of staying well for longer and in their own homes as part of a strong, connected and engaged community*

### Vision principles;

- Protecting the most vulnerable
- Reforming our services in partnership
- Inclusive growth and prosperity

### Vision priorities;

- Ensuring our children have the best possible start in life
- Improving the health and wellbeing of residents
- Businesses and investment are attracted to the borough, matching our workforce's skills with modern opportunities and employment
- Stronger, cohesive, more confident communities in which people feel safe, welcome and connected

### Drivers of change which underpin the 2030 Vision;

- Behaviour change
- Delivering efficiently
- Rebalancing our finances
- Maximising our assets
- Engaging and empowering

### Key National Drivers of Change:

- Children's Social Care Review
- The Greater Manchester Integrated Commissioning Board Health and Care Bill,
- Procurement Bill,
- Ofsted regulation changes inc. Supported accommodation
- Pending Mental Health Bill

### Key local Plans:

- Greater Manchester Sufficiency Plan
- Greater Manchester Care Leaves Workstream
- Greater Manchester Fostering Development Works

## Children's Plan - What is our vision?

We want Bolton to be a place that all children have the best possible start in life so they begin school ready to learn, thrive and be healthy and happy. We want our children to be educated in good schools and ensure they feel a sense of belonging in their journey throughout education, helping them to achieve their maximum potential in life, having access to further education, training and work. We want to improve outcomes for all children and young people and ensure that those that are in need of extra help and support receive it in a way that keeps them safe and listens and understands their individual needs. We want Bolton's children to see themselves as part of a thriving town in the future where they can live and work – the Children's plan is a key part of the broader economic recovery of the town with our children central to its success.

## Being part of Greater Manchester:

The challenge we face is to continue to improve the health and wellbeing of our children and young people in partnership with our Greater Manchester neighbours.

## Children and Young People's Delivery Plan:

Has four clear priorities which will help us achieve our vision for children and young people in Bolton:

**Priority 1:** The best start in life for all

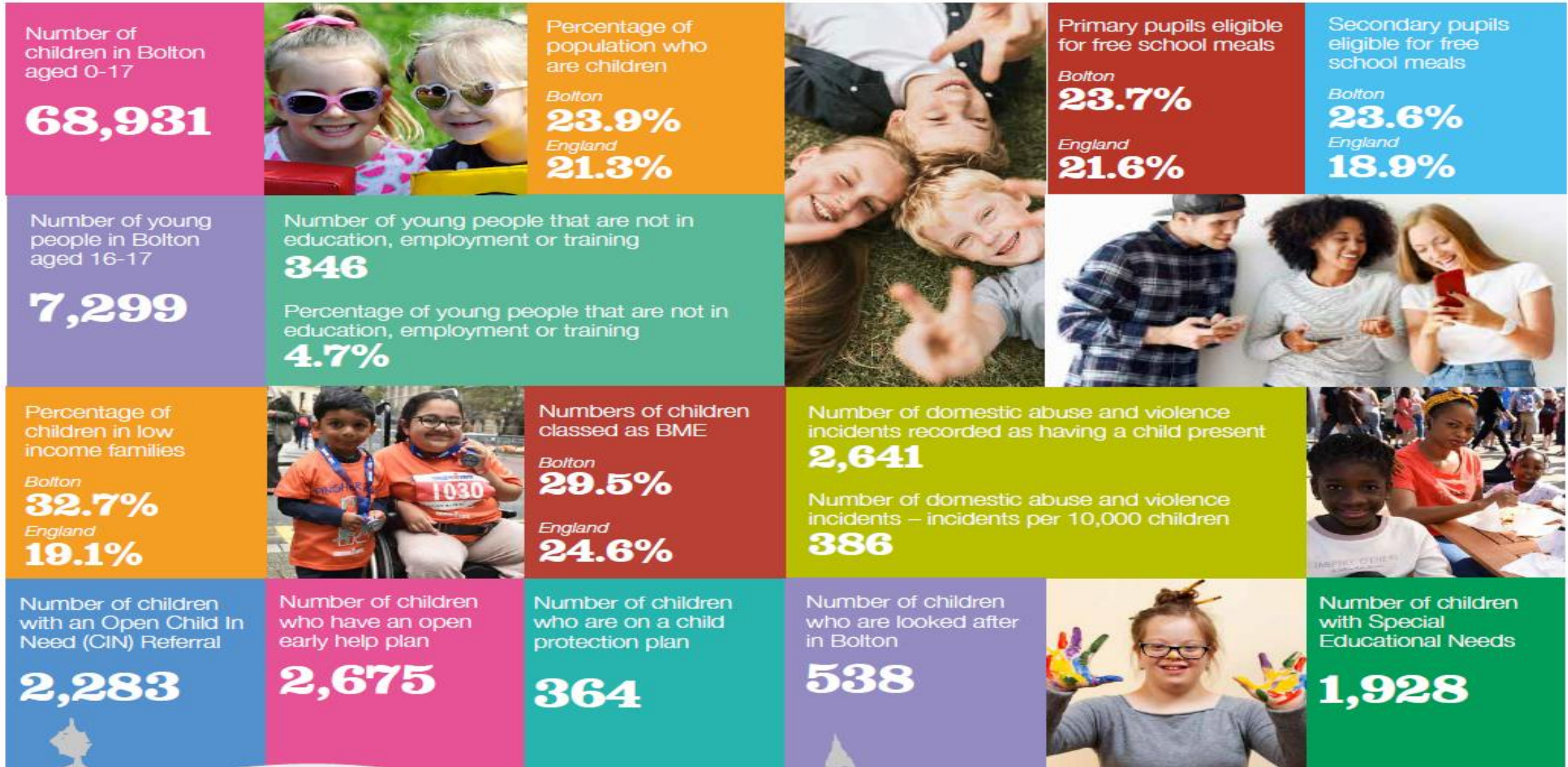
**Priority 2:** Keep children learning successfully in our schools

**Priority 3:** Keep children safe and help them to achieve permanence

**Priority 4:** All children will achieve their potential

# Key Bolton Intelligence

All data was correct at the time of publication (December 2021)



# GM Commissioning for Sufficiency Programme 2021

This is the GM Commissioning for Sufficiency Programme 2021 as agreed by all LA's and overseen by a GM Sufficiency Board with representation from Each LA including Bolton are part of the 4 project working groups and will help steer and influence the projects through to delivery.

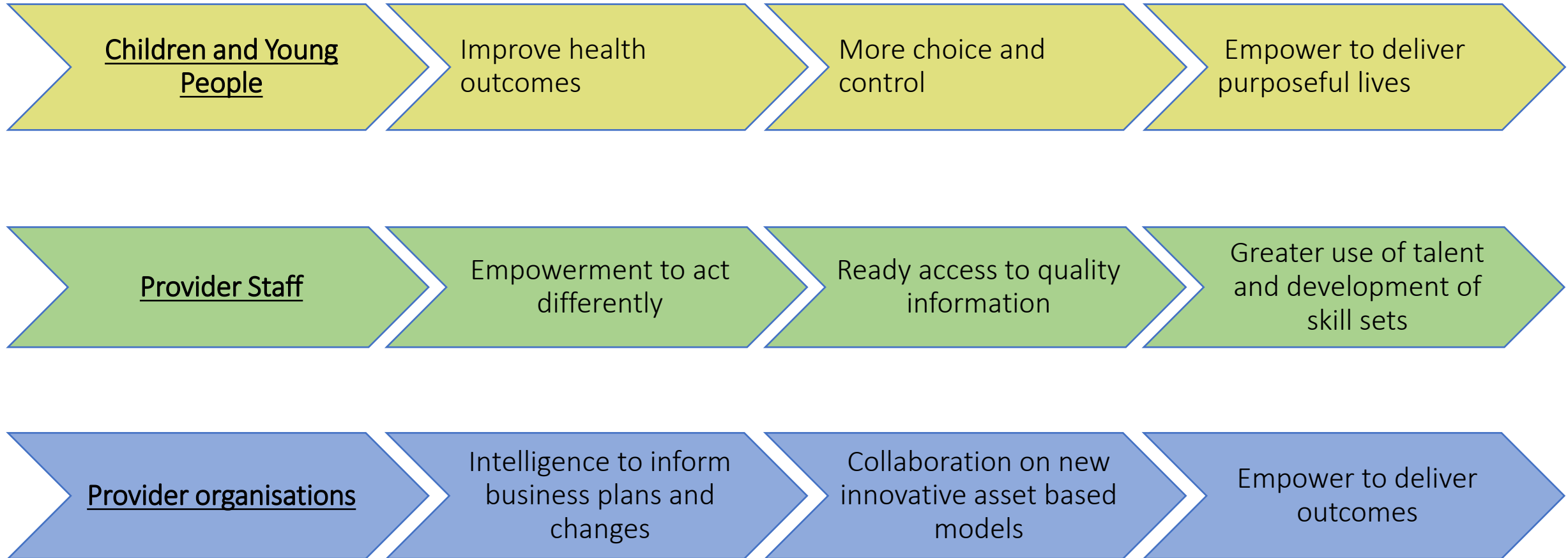
Commissioning for Sufficiency Programme 2021			
<b>1. Create new supply</b>	Establish ways to finance, develop and structure major capital projects to create new supply across GM. That might include LA run services, the creation of partially or wholly owned third sector subsidiaries and/or private partnerships.		
Engaged LAs (Represented on Working Group)	Bolton, Oldham, Manchester, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Rochdale	Informed LAs (Kept updated)	Trafford, Wigan, Bury
<b>2. Growth Partnerships</b>	Establish and launch local and regional mechanisms that encourage (and potentially support) growth of high quality Providers in GM. This includes exploring ways to level up the competitive inequality that exists within the market.		
Engaged LAs (Represented on Working Group)	Manchester, Stockport, Tameside, Wigan	Informed LAs (Kept updated)	Bolton, Oldham, Salford, Trafford, Rochdale, Bury
<b>3. Collaborative 'soft block' arrangements</b>	LAs are looking to commission collaborative 'soft block' arrangements in order to ring-fence capacity and give LAs a more strategic contractual partnership. This includes exploring a 'Block and Build' mechanism to prompt growth underpinned by guaranteed purchasing.		
Engaged LAs (Represented on Working Group)	Bolton, Stockport, Trafford, Wigan	Informed LAs (Kept updated)	Manchester, Oldham, Salford, Tameside, Rochdale, Bury
<b>4. GM First Policy</b>	Over 200 independent residential care placements in GM being from a non-GM LA. This project will develop a policy that formally sets out the principles of GM based services for GM children and young people along with targeted engagement with Providers taking non-GM children as well as other LAs placing here.		
Engaged LAs (Represented on Working Group)	Bolton, Oldham, Salford, Trafford	Informed LAs (Kept updated)	Manchester, Stockport, Tameside, Wigan, Rochdale, Bury

The GM Children's Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2020 – 2022 outlines many of our main challenges and sets out our vision to improve sufficiency of service across the region. More details including the GM Sufficiency Strategy 2020-22 can be found at: <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/children-and-young-people/childrens-sufficiency-observatory/>



# How will the Sufficiency Strategy Benefit Bolton?

Supports providers in the development and improvement of local services, and help ensure improved outcomes for Bolton children and young people as well as supporting the wider education, health and social care system, including the below:



# Partnership with Providers

## The Providers Commitment to Bolton we want is:

Those who have a track record of collaboration and co-producing service design with children, young people and their families

Delivering and evidencing social value – investing in Bolton, providing local employment, buying local services and products

Innovative and Outcome focused support which enables children and young people to reach their full potential and make a smooth transition into adulthood

Open and Transparent around how you manage services around the children/young people it supports, employees, financial and governance arrangements

## The Benefits of Providing Services in Bolton:

The Council and its partners passionately aim to deliver the best quality of life outcomes for children and young people

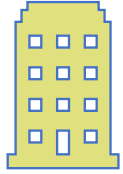
A collaborative and vibrant environment to shape the health and care system meaning you can work with Health and Care commissioners, clinicians, VCSE

Market intelligence will be shared to help shape the support and care offer and inform provider business plans

Access to other council expertise (planning), Environmental services, Revenues and Benefits, Corporate property

If you are interested in developing a service then please contact the Commissioning Team ([childrenscommissioning@bolton.gov.uk](mailto:childrenscommissioning@bolton.gov.uk)) who can explain about what we require and don't require across the Borough.

# Key Transformation Themes



## Greater neighbourhood focus on Early Help

working with the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector to enable children and young people to use their own strengths, local assets to provide them with the quality of life and outcomes they require.



## Make use of innovative new approaches – new models of service, ways of working, new technologies and contract to transform the service offer

For children, young people and their families and at the same time become more efficient and effective businesses.



## Living closer to home

the default position is any care and support service offer should be delivered as close to home as possible complimented by the use of local assets which facilitate children & Young people to be active in their communities.



## Provider Workforce needs to be supported and transformed

to provide an agile offer to enable children and young people to live and thrive in their communities.

# Sufficiency Requirements

Prevention and Early Help Offer.  
How we change this offer is by a new approach which brings existing services together to support children and families when extra support is needed around health, education, parenting, emotional well-being etc. We want all providers to align with this significant prevention offer

Early Help and Prevention

When a child or young person faces a crisis,  
We are seeking additional capacity for respite and short term breaks  
Offer short-term options that will support placement or home stability and avoid breakdowns.  
Permanence Plan in place to have a secure future.

Fostering  
We require additional capacity in local foster care and introduce a varied and wide range of options for all age groups, specialist and short break users. Foster Carers required to prepare and support young people to return to family and/or independence.

Residential  
We require and support additional Soft Block Contracted local residential care homes This means we want to  
\*secure first choice on any future vacancies, for Bolton and Greater Manchester.  
\*planned placements/ reducing reactive and increase options for outreach and wider services.  
\*Permanence planning to include step down to fostering or family, and independence.

Support

Semi Independent Living & other accommodation based services  
We have a sufficient supply and have a diverse offer across the Borough.  
However for existing provision we want to:  
\*Co-Produce bespoke placements with providers.  
\*Permanence planning to include return to family, and independent living.

Specialist Support

Children with disabilities  
Children and Young People have the same access and opportunities in the home and placement as their peers.  
Placements should meet their education and health needs. Permanence planning to include return to family, independence or supported living.

Mental Health  
Increase the service offer options for young people with mental health, with complex needs but do not always meet National Health mental health criteria.  
Need options for Step down where therapy is not needed but a higher level of support is required. Permanence planning to include return to family, independence or supported living.

# Early Help and Prevention



## Early Help and prevention

### Overall market description:

This service offer is a very different approach and can cover a wide variety of services including the offer from the voluntary and community sector

### The Approach:

Our plan is to build up and extend the Early Help Offer to ensure it is available for children of all ages up to age 18 – as soon as problems start to stop things from getting worse. Parents (or a child themselves if they are old enough) can ask for Early Help, or a worker that is already involved with a family may suggest that Early Help support might be needed.

### How does it work?

Once it has been agreed that Early Help would be beneficial, the parent, child and worker should discuss and agree what is going well for the family and what extra support is needed (an assessment and plan). The assessment and plan will be recorded on a standard form to make sure that everyone understands the situation and works well without the family having to repeat their information. Sometimes, if a few services are needed then we would ensure that all the support is co-ordinated. Ensure diversity and choice of this service offer by encouraging the use of peer support, carers groups, other local volunteer groups to continue to play a vital role in maintaining people's health and well being and independence at home.



## Fostering

### Overall market description:

Bolton **Foster Care** - There are 310 fostering households in the borough with 243 'in house' and 67 with Independent Fostering Agencies.

### How do we change this offer:

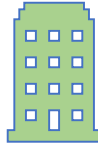
All our plans align with the GM approach to developing and commissioning the Foster care offer. The demand for local foster care places continues to rise, especially for older young people and challenging behaviours. We want to increase the capacity for Bolton with complete access/rights to Bolton beds. The increase in external Fostering placement requests has identified that there are gaps in the market.

Local (Bolton & surrounding near area) fostering providers who will engage with challenging young people in care/step down to fostering in local homes/Bolton area or surrounding 5-mile radius area and prioritise Bolton beds for Bolton young people. Foster Carers to not be limited to younger children. Short Break Foster Carers in and around Bolton for children with complex health, and for children with challenging behaviours.

### What we fund at present:

21 Independent Fostering beds in Bolton. 42 beds are funded Out of Borough. (July 2021).

# Living Closer To Home



## Residential Children's Homes

### Overall market description:

In Bolton there are 10 providers including the Local Authority with 24 homes and 89 beds. 46 of these beds are Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND).

Bolton Local Authority have 20 beds of which 11 are Special Education Needs and Disability SEND. Within Bolton there are 69 beds within Private or Voluntary run homes 35 of which are Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND).

### How do we want to change this offer:

Currently we are not aiming to increase the number of residential beds. However we want to work in close partnership with existing local providers who are committed to Bolton and will prioritise their vacancies for our children. This will allow us to place local and bring back to Bolton those children and young people who are placed at a distance unnecessarily. This will include 'step down' to fostering wherever possible. The demand for local residential places continues to rise, especially for older young people with challenging behaviours and mental health. We want to increase the capacity for Bolton with complete access/rights to Bolton beds

### What we fund at present:

Bolton currently place in only 32 of the 89 beds in Bolton and also has 25 children in Out of Borough residential placements. (26<sup>th</sup> August 2022) – This can change on a daily basis.



## Semi Independent Living

### Overall market description:

In Bolton there are 11 providers including the Local Authority with 18 homes and 68 beds.

There are also 95 beds which are blocked purchased through 2 providers.

### How do we want to change this offer:

The Semi Independent Living market in Bolton remains stable however we need to change how we meet the needs of those YP with mental health needs and challenging behaviours to ensure they are supported through to independence.

We want to work with providers in Bolton to gain complete access/rights to Bolton beds and discuss bespoke placements for those with additional support requirements.

### What we fund at present

Bolton has a block contract with two local voluntary organisations who provide 95 beds for young people.

Currently Bolton place in 14 of the 68 Semi Independent Living beds in the Borough. (26<sup>th</sup> August 2022) – This can change on a daily basis.

# Supporting the Provider Workforce

In Bolton, we want to make sure that everyone who works with children, young people and families have the skills and resources that they need to deliver excellent services which are safe and improve outcomes for everyone. We want all our children in care and those leaving care to be:

- Prepared for adulthood and to aspire and achieve.
- Live good, local, family-based placements so that their education, friendships and community connections can be sustained.

**Issues:** The workforce should be able to:

- Commit to Bolton and our most vulnerable children, young people and communities
- Provide early help and support in a timely and effective way.
- Help prevent children going into care and when they do, ensure they can achieve permanence as soon as possible.
- Be strong, focused and integrated across health, education and social care leading to more targeted workforce development initiatives for children in care and care leavers.
- Navigate complex system and process and remove barriers.
- Work in a multi-agency way across education, health and care.
- Ensure more support to improve the transition into adulthood.
- Want to improve overall education, health and care outcomes for children in care and care leavers.
- Maintain a focus on inclusion and ensuring all children get their right to a full education.
- Be aware of and face the challenge of the high number of vacancies in the social work workforce.

[Children's Social Work Workforce Link](#)

**Support:** What we can offer is access to a multi-agency safeguarding training programme. The programme is open to anyone who works with children, young people, their parents or carers in Bolton and is free to access.