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Residential Children's Home in Kirklees – Evidence of Need and Strategic Alignment

We are submitting this statement in support of my planning application for a new residential children's home within the Kirklees area. I've taken the time to carefully read and consider the Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2023–2025 published by Kirklees Council, which sets out their priorities and challenges when it comes to providing care for children in the borough. Based on what the strategy outlines, we believe there is a clear and growing need for more local residential provision, and this application is intended to help meet that need.

Kirklees Council, like all local authorities, is legally required to make sure there are enough suitable homes for children who are looked after. This is set out in Section 22G of the Children Act 1989, which says councils must take steps to secure accommodation that meets children's needs, ideally within the borough where they live. The Council's strategy acknowledges this duty and explains how it is trying to meet it (see Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2023–2025, p.2).

The strategy highlights that although the number of children in care has dropped in recent years, this trend is expected to reverse. The Council forecasts a rise in the number of children looked after from 604 in March 2022 to around 650 by March 2025 (see pp. 5–8). They link this to increased pressures on families across Kirklees, including the rising cost of living and poverty. We understand that Kirklees is now ranked 73rd out of 317 local authorities in terms of deprivation, which marks a worsening position since 2015.

From this, it's clear to me that more children and young people are likely to need support from the local authority over the next few years and that includes access to safe, stable residential placements.

The Council's strategy explains that only 35% of the residential placements it uses are provided by its own in-house children's homes. The remaining two-thirds are bought from independent or private providers, often located outside the borough (p.12). This tells us that there is already a shortage of suitable residential homes in Kirklees and that the Council is heavily reliant on external services to meet local demand.

We also took note of the fact that while Kirklees has around 30 private children's homes offering 99 places, only six of those places were being used for children from Kirklees at the time the strategy was written. The rest were being used by children from other areas, meaning there's very limited availability for Kirklees children to remain in their local communities (p.13).

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RESIDENTIAL

The strategy provides some insight into the profile of children who are placed in residential care, and it's clear that these children have often experienced significant disruption and hardship. For example:

82% of the children in residential care in Kirklees have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), compared to 50% nationally.

On average, these children have had seven previous placements before being placed in a children's home (p.13).

From this, we understand that these children require a high level of support and stability, and they benefit from homes that are equipped to meet both their emotional and educational needs. It reinforces the importance of developing small, well-supported children's homes where young people can receive consistent care in a setting that feels secure and familiar.

The Council has made it clear that one of its key priorities is to expand its residential provision so that more children can be placed closer to home. They've stated their intention to grow in-house provision and develop smaller residential homes to provide more flexible and specialist care options (p.18).

They also explain the benefits of doing so, including:

Enabling children to stay near their schools, families, and communities.

Reducing the disruption caused by out-of-area placements.

Lowering costs by avoiding expensive external placements.

Increasing the overall stability and quality of care (p.13–16).

We believe that my proposed children's home fits squarely within these goals. It will provide a small, stable environment for children with complex needs, and it will be based within the borough, helping Kirklees meet its own sufficiency target and reduce reliance on private providers based outside the area.

After reviewing the Council's Placement Sufficiency Strategy and reflecting on my own experience, it's clear to me that there is not only a shortage of residential care within Kirklees, but also a genuine need to provide children with homes that are rooted in their own communities.

This planning application is about more than responding to numbers or meeting capacity targets, it's about offering Kirklees children an opportunity to grow up in a place that feels familiar, with access to local schools, services, and ongoing relationships with the people who matter to them.

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Our goal in opening this home is specifically to support children from Kirklees. We have seen first-hand the challenges that arise when children are placed out of area. These placements, though often made with the best intentions, can lead to difficulties in maintaining family contact, accessing specialist local support, and ensuring consistent educational and health provision. Too often, children become disconnected from the people, professionals, and places that could otherwise help them thrive.

This home is being proposed to give Kirklees children the opportunity to stay local. The staff will understand the area and the services available; we will be working closely with local professionals, and the children placed with us won't feel like outsiders in a different part of the country. They'll be in a setting that not only meets their needs but also values who they are and where they come from.

By creating a safe, caring, and local home, we want to play a part in helping children in care from Kirklees experience more stability, stronger relationships, and better long-term outcomes. This home is a small but meaningful step in supporting the Council's commitment to keeping children close to their communities and giving them the best chance to build a positive future.