APPENDIX A - OPTIONS APPRAISAL TO PLACEMENT COMMISSIONING

Options appraisal – full tables & discussion

Summary of recommendations

1. *Foster care: Option E* – current CBC placement costs and messages from the market indicate that the widely-used 'in-house first' system and commissioning arrangements that are essentially spot-purchasing from frameworks cannot guarantee sufficiency, represent poor value for money due to variable costs, and can result in poor quality placements and outcomes. This is unsustainable both for the LA and for providers. Where other authorities are trialling block-contract IFA models to meet specific needs, these have the potential to reduce costs dramatically in the longer term. While volumes of throughput are not guaranteed, the potential risks of using this model could be managed; i.e. by ring-fencing accommodation for the most complex and high-needs children and young people while maintaining a framework/DPS arrangement for placements at lower levels of need. A block contract could be let on a 3-year basis to offer some stability, while giving a manageable timeframe for review.

2. *16+ semi-independent: Option D or E* – current in-house placements offer good options for keeping vulnerable young people close as they transition to adulthood, while the local market offers enough placements to meet need – however, these need to offer greater variety to support young people's move-on housing aspirations. It would be desirable to streamline the current fragmented commissioning arrangements, and potentially secure better value for money through a block (given consistent numbers of forecast placements).

3. *Residential: Option B or C* – although the exact cost implications of bringing the Clophill home in-house are yet to be fully understood, the current trend towards lower numbers of residential placements mean that it is not cost-effective to maintain a mixed economy for this accommodation type, and that an 'all in-house' or 'all external' (ideally as one or two block contracts, with potential for an additional framework for out of area) would be more efficient, keep our most vulnerable young people closer to home and enable income generation through letting out unused beds to other local authorities.

Phase 1: Foster Care

- Due to volumes of placements, MTFP pressures, issues with operating the IFA DPS and the commissioning timescales for this contract, it is proposed to prioritise fostering in the first phase of commissioning for this project.
- We will need to identify how best to utilise in-house and IFA provision to minimise competition with agencies for carers, influence IFA service development and improve sufficiency/availability, including a contingency plan with commissioning options in the event of not achieving our ambition to place 70% of fostered children in-house.

- Commissioning plans will need to align with the strategy for Fostering transformation. This strategy aims to bridge the gap between increasing numbers of Looked after Children and a national decline in the number of fostering households through a range of initiatives:
    - Foster carer incentives – potential increase in rates, increased recruitment bonus, similar financial packages/honouring current placement rates for carers who join from IFAs, home loan scheme to boost household capacity
    - Support for carers – in-house clinical psychologist, 24/7 support, smaller social worker caseload, respite offer, drop-in coffee mornings, encouraging 150 local businesses to become Fostering Friendly Employers, regional partnerships with neighbouring boroughs, Start Thinking About Fostering parties
    - Therapeutic offer – training for carers and supervising social workers in Dyadic Development Practice (e.g. PACE) & Mockingbird models (investigate potential of Social Impact Bond to implement Mockingbird). It is estimated that fewer than 10% of children and young people would need specific 'therapeutic' foster placements.
- A new IFA contract could also include a Framework for spot-purchased residential/parent and child accommodation.
- For all options except B, there are variations for how we could commission
    - CBC only – greater control but fewer economies of scale
    - Consortium with Bedford and/or Luton – shared control but current relationships lack maturity, greater purchasing power
    - Consortium with other regional neighbours (e.g. CRAAG) – shared control and may need to pay membership fee, greater purchasing power and potentially lower rates

Option	Description	Desirability	Viability	Feasibility	Risk	Potential?
A	'As is'/commission like-for-like (Mixed economy with same needs required from in-house & IFA; consortium with BBC & LBC)	**Poor** Does not currently offer value for money or sufficiency. Quality of placements can be variable, and due to frequent off-contract purchasing it is difficult to hold providers to account and evidence outcomes.	**Poor** Overspend on fostering budget esp. IFA Current consortium arrangement not delivering value for money	**Moderate/Poor** Resource needed for internal service development/new IFA specification is factored into service BAU Contract management requirements are not onerous However, neither internal pool nor external market can meet current need	H	N
B	All in-house	**Moderate** In-house foster placements offer good value for money, with carers often managing	**Good** At current average weekly rates this would give a	**Poor** Plans for increased carer recruitment detailed in the Fostering transformation	M	N (Not at current time but potential

		high-needs young people in lower-cost placements with positive outcomes. However, it is currently difficult to achieve sufficiency even at 70% aspiration and a move to in-house would stifle provider market & reduce local options. Potential for longer-term planning as impact of Fostering transformation takes effect.	total fostering cost (incl. F&F) of approximately: 19/20: £4,381,104 20/21: £4,566,744 We would also be able to keep more children close to home, have greater control over the service and flexibility to adapt to meet emerging needs	strategy will take some time to deliver outcomes – we do not currently have a sufficient pool of in-house carers to implement this option. Would require extensive recruitment of supervising social workers to support fostering households Increased management requirements (although less need for contract management)		for longer-term development)
C	All IFA	**Moderate/Poor** Better guarantee of meeting sufficiency if competition between LA & IFAs is reduced. This may increase pool of suppliers and reduce off-contract purchasing, as well as offer economies of scale. However, does not align with corporate aspiration to place 70% in-house and clear demarcation of need/commissioning strategy would be needed.	**Poor** At current average weekly rates this would give a total fostering cost (incl. forecast F&F) of approximately: 19/20: £10,124,400 20/21: £10,553,400 (with forecast F&F paid at in-house rate): 19/20: £9,394,320 20/21: £9,823,320 We would also have limited control over locations of placements & cost fluctuations unless a block contract was in place (which may also lower some costs)	**Moderate/Good** Contract management would be more resource-intensive than present but new contract management posts are being recruited both in CBC (if we contract as single-agency) and Bedford BC (if we go into consortium as at present) – management responsibility is therefore viable and would help build closer relationships with providers. Provider market currently has difficulty meeting sufficiency due to ad-hoc nature of IFA commissioning and competition with LAs & other IFAs for carers. A larger framework/contract	H	M

				would require closer engagement with providers to develop (leading to better relationships), offer more guarantee of income and potentially increase pool of available carers. However, current in-house carers may not want to transfer out to private sector.		
D	Mixed economy of in-house & IFA framework/DPS – clear demarcation of usage for each type	**Moderate** Better chance of achieving value for money & sufficiency by clearly identifying needs. As long as off-contract spend can be reduced (e.g. through increasing pool of suppliers), there is greater potential to hold providers to account and evidence outcomes.	**Moderate** At current average weekly rates and assuming 70% in-house aspiration is met, this would give a total fostering cost of approx.: 19/20: £6,108,960 20/21: £6,367,608 Assuming a 50-50 split: 19/20: £6,330,792 20/21: £6,638,112	**Moderate** Would reduce competition between IFAs & LA for carers and potentially improve sufficiency Resource needed for internal service development/new IFA specification is factored into service BAU Contract management requirements are not onerous	M	Y
E	Mixed economy of in-house & IFA framework/DPS plus IFA block(s) – clear demarcation of usage for each type	**Moderate** Better chance of achieving value for money & sufficiency by clearly identifying needs. As long as off-contract spend can be reduced (e.g. through increasing pool of suppliers), there is greater potential to hold providers to account and evidence outcomes.	**Good** As option D but potential for additional savings through block contracting (must be balanced with potential need to pay retainer fees for empty beds) Benchmarking data indicate that block contracting does not immediately result in	**Moderate/Good** Resource needed for internal service development/new IFA specification is factored into service BAU Contract management requirements are slightly greater at present but could be absorbed by new contract manager posts Would reduce competition between IFAs & LA for	M	Y

		Block contracts will assist in this as contract management arrangements are more robust – likely to also result in better quality placements.	reduction in average weekly cost; however, Warwickshire's block arrangement specifies reduction in cost to close to in-house rate within 2 years of placement – could be used well with VC as evidence for reduction of need.	carers and potentially improve sufficiency A block contract would require closer engagement with providers to develop (leading to better relationships), offer more guarantee of income to providers and potentially increase pool of available carers – this aligns with messages from sector. Would additionally guarantee placement when needed for specific needs – we would need to ensure correct balance between block & framework/DPS, and correct needs commissioned to block.		

Phase 2: 16+ semi-independent

- With the main 16+ DPS ending in 2021, there is a moderate time pressure on recommissioning for semi-independent provision. This element of the project could be phased so that work could begin while IFA contracts are out to tender (from September 2019)
- UASC SLA with Housing is a rolling contract, and arrangement with Athena will have potential for extension to align with end-date of DPS. This provision could therefore be considered for recommissioning as a whole.

Option	Description	Desirability	Viability	Feasibility	Risk	Potential?
A	'As is'/commission like-for-like (Mixed economy with DPS for 'local' YPs and	**Moderate/Poor** When used effectively, current DPS supplements SLA with Housing well to give good options for sufficiency and includes placements within	**Poor** At current average weekly rates and assuming current composition (approx. 64% UASC), this would give a total annual 16+ cost for	**Moderate** The DPS is currently used inconsistently due to a) frequent need to place YPs at short-notice, b) historical verbal agreements that it did not need to be used for	H	N

	separate contracts/SLAs for UASC housing)	Bedfordshire and beyond; however, arrangements are too fragmented to ensure the right placement at the right time for YPs. Most DPS placements offer value for money (where system is used properly); however, there is a wide variation in costs between providers for YPs at same level of need. Even with Quality Assurance input, quality of placements can be variable as providers are acquiring accommodation and not always notifying commissioning team of new provision. This results in variable outcomes for young people.	19/20 and 20/21 of around £1,580,800. (Efficiency targets render this undesirable)	UASC and c) aversion to change. This means contract management responsibilities are fragmented and onerous, and there are some non-compliant procurement practices. However, in contrast to other areas of the country, there is a burgeoning local 16+ market. The DPS gives us access to a framework of over 160 beds with 18 providers, and more suppliers are applying to join all the time (although placements are not always guaranteed at the right time and place due to ad-hoc nature of purchasing). The Housing service is also consistently developing provision for our use.		
B	All in-house (i.e. delivered through Housing)	**Moderate/Good** Opportunities to work in partnership with other Council services to keep our most vulnerable YPs close and facilitate local connections for move-on to 18+ housing. Placements are good value for money and high-quality, and Housing has good links with commissioning &	**Good** Properties offered through Housing deliver good value for only at £350 per placement per week. This would give a total annual cost for 19/20 and 20/21 of around £728,000. However, this is based on the cost of unstaffed houses – the need for 24/7 staffing in some properties would increase costs.	**Moderate** This option is a positive move for future expansion, but currently would require double the amount of provision offered by Housing – no guarantee that sufficient properties would be available within timescales or that the service would want to take on full delivery responsibilities for 16+.	M	N

		corporate parenting, ensuring good outcomes. However, current stock cannot guarantee sufficiency, and a move to in-house would stifle provider market & reduce local options.		Additional resource would need to be identified to offer 24/7 staffing in some properties, as well as keywork support for around 40 young people at any given time (current provision is for 18 LAC beds and 3 care leaver beds, with 5 hours floating support per placement per week).		
C	All outsourced	**Moderate/Poor** Provider market gives good options for sufficiency and includes placements within Bedfordshire and beyond.; Most external placements offer value for money; however, there is a wide variation in costs between providers for YPs at same level of need – some standard contract/banding would need to be introduced. Even with Quality Assurance input, quality of placements can be variable as providers are acquiring accommodation and not always notifying commissioning team of new provision. This results in variable outcomes for young people and would require more robust contract	**Moderate** Costs are variable depending on commissioning process and needs of young people (workings exclude specialist high-needs placements): Spot-purchased from non-DPS provider: average £620 per placement per week - £1,289,411 total p/a. *Spot-purchased from DPS provider: average £549.10 per placement per week - £1,142,133 total p/a. Awarded through DPS contract: average £577.31 per placement per week - £1,200,805 total p/a. Additional savings could potentially be made through block contracting (must be balanced with potential	**Moderate/Good** Contract management would be more resource-intensive than present but new contract management posts are being recruited – management responsibility is therefore viable and would help build closer relationships with providers Viability is dependent on consistent use of any DPS/framework arrangement and effective utilisation & matching of any block-contracted beds – i.e. best match to meet young people's needs rather than filling bed spaces. Valuing Care can support with this. In contrast to other areas of the country, there is a burgeoning local 16+ market. The DPS gives us access to a framework of over 160 beds with 18	M	M

		management than present to maximise use of commissioning arrangements.	need to pay retainer fees for empty beds).	providers, and more suppliers are applying to join all the time (although placements are not always guaranteed at the right time and place due to ad-hoc purchasing).		
D	Mixed economy of in-house & framework/DPS – clear demarcation of usage for each type	**Good** Reducing fragmentation of contracting arrangements would streamline placements process. Better guarantee of sufficiency by reducing competition between LA & providers for some types of placements, while maximising use of external market (building capacity). More robust contract management could maintain value for money and ensure consistent quality of placements.	**Moderate** Costs would be dependent on what each type of provision was used for and balance of in-house to outsourced requirements. Likely to be somewhat lower than present due to better commissioning/contracting arrangements & better matching as a result of Valuing Care.	**Good** Would reduce competition between providers and LA for some types of placement (e.g. UASC) and allow greater specialism/scope for development. This may improve sufficiency although ad-hoc purchasing does not guarantee the right placement would be available at the right time for YPs. Resource needed for internal service development/new specification is factored into service BAU Contract management requirements would be similar to present and not onerous.	L	Y
E	Mixed economy of in-house & framework/DPS plus external block(s) – clear demarcation of	**Good** Better guarantee of sufficiency by reducing competition between LA & providers for some types of placements, while	**Good** Costs would be dependent on what each type of provision was used for and balance of in-house to outsourced requirements.	**Good** Would reduce competition between providers and LA for some types of placement (e.g. UASC) and allow greater specialism/scope for	M	Y (marked as ‘moderate’ risk because we have

	usage for each type	maximising use of external market (building capacity). As forecast 16+ numbers are stable and consistent and UASC numbers are capped, it would make sense to block-commission some of this provision and work together with the local market to develop accommodation to meet needs. More robust contract management could maintain value for money and ensure consistent quality of placements.	Likely to be somewhat lower than present due to better commissioning/contracting arrangements & better matching as a result of Valuing Care. Potential for additional savings through block contracting (must be balanced with potential need to pay retainer fees for empty beds) – Warwickshire's 16+ block is more than 50% cheaper than framework costs.	development. This may improve sufficiency. A block contract would require closer engagement with providers to develop (leading to better relationships), offer more guarantee of income to providers and potentially increase provision. Would additionally guarantee placement when needed for specific needs – we would need to ensure correct balance between block & framework/DPS, and correct needs commissioned to block. Resource needed for internal service development/new service specification is factored into service BAU. Contract management requirements would be slightly greater and more fragmented than present but could be absorbed by new contract manager posts.		not done this before, but similar process is working well in statistical neighbour authorities)

* As placements commissioned outside of InTend have better average weekly rates (although on average, are not as long-lasting), and as the DPS system is not currently well-used, it may be more efficient to implement a standard Framework from which placements officers can call-off at need and short notice. This would also be the case for options D & E.

Phase 3: Residential

- As the Clophill home has recently transferred in-house, there is no time pressure on residential commissioning at a strategic level (although it would be useful to implement placement contracts for spot-purchased placements in the short term).
- Longer-term, residential provision needs could be reviewed in conjunction with the ongoing SEND placement strategy with a view to developing a potential capital bid programme to meet sufficiency needs for mainstream and CWD young people.

Option	Description	Desirability (finance)	Viability (resource)	Feasibility (market)	Risk	Potential?
A	'As is'/commission like-for-like (Mixed economy with 5 mainstream beds in-house and 4 spot-purchased out of area)	**Poor** There are not sufficient placements in-area to meet potential residential need, and those there are mainstream – not suitable for more complex SEMH needs. This results in spot-purchased out of area placements, which do not represent value for money and can be of variable quality. Young people may lose local networks as a result of being placed out of area, reducing opportunities for participation and risking stability when they transition to adulthood.	**TBC** (Need to add financial implications of bringing Clophill in-house – pension/management liability etc) Reduction in use of spot-purchase means lower costs overall, but rates and numbers of YP needing placement are not guaranteed.	**Poor** Loss of Bunyan Road home means 3 fewer in-house beds and reduced choice of internal placements. No placements are currently made with local external market, so uncertain whether these providers can meet need – hence placements out of area. Maintaining Clophill in-house requires CBC to ensure registration of home, manager & responsible individual (this has already resulted in issues & delays) – this gives better control of service, but also additional management responsibility. CBC will be responsible for ensuring staff recruitment & training at Clophill and will bear	H	N

				ultimate responsibility for any safeguarding issues. In addition, out of area placements require further levels of contract management & QA oversight. Time taken to broker a placement for spot-purchase.		
B	All in-house (Develop 2nd mainstream/SEMH home)	**Moderate/Good** Clophill home currently offers safe and stable local placements for vulnerable young people – more complex YPs would benefit from similar arrangement. Streamlined placements process – more timely placements. Would ensure sufficiency and potential for income generation by letting out unused beds, and a move to in-house would stifle provider market & reduce local options. Represents better value for money than current arrangement, but until cost implications of maintaining Clophill in-house are fully understood, it is not known whether VFM would be greater than commissioning out.	**TBC** (Need to add financial implications of bringing Clophill in-house – pension/management liability etc) No guarantee we would use all beds, but excess could be offered to other LAs as income generation (however, this may mean placements are unavailable when we need them).	**Moderate** Maintaining Clophill in-house requires CBC to ensure registration of home, manager & responsible individual (this has already resulted in issues & delays) – this gives better control of service, but also additional management responsibility. CBC will be responsible for ensuring staff recruitment & training at Clophill and will bear ultimate responsibility for any safeguarding issues. Further human resource will be needed to develop additional in-house provision to meet sufficiency. Capital bid will be required to secure funding to develop an additional mainstream/SEMH home.	M	M

		Quality could be guaranteed through current monitoring arrangements. However, it is likely that some YPs will always need to be placed out of area due to specific needs.				
C	All outsourced (Either as block contract, framework/DPS or spot-purchase)	**Good** Previous contracts have shown that if suppliers are properly managed, it is possible to achieve good levels of sufficiency by commissioning out provision. Streamlined placements process – more timely placements. Block contracts offer better guarantee of value for money than other external options (on current costs, by approx. £2,226 per placement per week) – benchmarking identifies that authorities operating framework arrangements for residential pay in excess of £3,000 per placement per week. Quality could be guaranteed through robust contract management.	**Moderate** All block contract – At average weekly rate for block commission of £1,918 and assuming 2/3 of forecast LAC are non-CWD, estimated total annual mainstream residential costs would be approximately: 19/20: £997,360 20/21: £864,379 No guarantee we would use all beds, but surplus could be offered to other LAs as income generation (however, this may mean placements are unavailable when we need them). All spot-purchase – At average weekly rate for spot-purchased placement: 19/20: £1,693,120 20/21: £1,467,371	**Moderate** If all placements are commissioned on a block, a Capital bid will be required to secure funding to develop an additional mainstream/SEMH home – alternatively, responsibility could be shifted to a potential provider, but this may increase contract costs. No placements are currently made with local external market, so uncertain whether these providers can meet need if all spot-purchased. Resource needed for new service specification is factored into commissioning BAU. Contract management requirements are slightly greater at present but could be absorbed by new contract manager posts. Potential for disputes with providers – resolution is resource-intensive.	M	Y

			Clophill as block contract and remainder spot-purchased: 19/20: £1,345,240 20/21: £1,119,491			
D	Mixed economy of in-house, spot-purchase & framework/DPS – clear demarcation of usage for each type	**Poor** Fragmented placements/commissioning process – would reduce guarantee of sufficiency, prohibit development of economies of scale and potentially delay YPs' placements – risk to stability & outcomes. Little potential for value for money as placement costs would be extremely variable depending on provision type – although demarcation of need would offset this to an extent. Risk of variable quality of provision in spot-purchased placements, as there are no clear performance measures to hold providers to account.	**TBC** (Need to add financial implications of bringing Clophill in-house – pension/management liability etc) Some spot-purchased placements will likely always be necessary to match young people to the most appropriate setting.	**Moderate/Poor** Loss of Bunyan Road home means 3 fewer in-house beds and reduced choice of internal placements. No placements are currently made with local external market, so uncertain whether these providers can meet need. However, a residential framework (either single agency/regional) may provide greater sufficiency. Maintaining Clophill in-house requires CBC to ensure registration of home, manager & responsible individual (this has already resulted in issues & delays) – this gives better control of service, but also additional management responsibility. CBC will be responsible for ensuring staff recruitment & training at Clophill and will bear	M/H	N

				ultimate responsibility for any safeguarding issues. Contract management requirements for external placements would be similar to present and not onerous. There is not enough volume of need for residential to warrant the human resource of managing this arrangement.		
E	Mixed economy of in-house, spot-purchase & framework/DPS plus block(s) – clear demarcation of usage for each type	**Poor** Even greater fragmentation of placements/commissioning process – would reduce guarantee of sufficiency, prohibit development of economies of scale and potentially delay YPs' placements – risk to stability & outcomes. Little potential for value for money as placement costs would be extremely variable depending on provision type – although demarcation of need would offset this to an extent. Risk of variable quality of provision in spot-purchased placements, as there are no clear performance measures to hold providers to account.	**TBC** Costs are dependent on the number & type of placements to be brought in-house, contracted as blocks and spot purchased/purchased through frameworks (Need to add financial implications of bringing Clophill in-house – pension/management liability etc) Some spot-purchased placements will likely always be necessary to match young people to the most appropriate setting. Potential for additional savings through block contracting (must be	**Poor** Loss of Bunyan Road home means 3 fewer in-house beds and reduced choice of internal placements. This could be compensated for by block-purchasing beds/a further home (but see option C). No placements are currently made with local external market, so uncertain whether these providers can meet need. However, a residential framework (either single agency/regional) may provide greater sufficiency. Maintaining Clophill in-house requires CBC to ensure registration of home, manager & responsible individual (this	H	N

			balanced with potential need to pay retainer fees for empty beds).	has already resulted in issues & delays) – this gives better control of service, but also additional management responsibility. CBC will be responsible for ensuring staff recruitment & training at Clophill and will bear ultimate responsibility for any safeguarding issues. Contract management requirements would be slightly greater and more fragmented than present but could be absorbed by new contract manager posts. There is not enough volume of need for residential to warrant the human resource of managing this arrangement.		