

# STATEMENT OF NEED AND JUSTIFICATION

## Proposed Change of Use from C3 (Dwellinghouse) to C2 (Children's Home)

99 Lang Avenue, Barnsley, S71 5LU

### 1. Introduction

This statement demonstrates the clear and evidenced need for additional children's residential care provision within Barnsley, South Yorkshire and the wider Yorkshire and Humber region.

The justification for the proposed development is informed by national and regional evidence, including:

- The **Department for Education – Children's Social Care in England** statistical releases,
- the **Department for Education – Children Looked After in England (including adoption)** dataset,
- The **Ofsted Annual Report – Children's Social Care**,
- The **National Audit Office – Children's Social Care in England**,
- The **English Local Authority Children's Placement Sufficiency Analysis 2024/25**,
- the **Health Equity North / Child of the North APPG – Children in Care and Inequality reports**, and
- The **Barnsley Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report**.

These sources collectively confirm that there is an ongoing and growing demand for children's residential care and a persistent shortage of suitable local provision.

### 2. National evidence of need

National evidence published by the **Department for Education** in its *Children's Social Care in England* and *Children Looked After in England* releases demonstrates increasing and sustained demand for children's social care services and residential placements for children with more complex needs.

This national picture is reinforced by the **National Audit Office – Children's Social Care in England** report, which identifies:

- increasing demand for children's social care,
- continuing pressure on placement availability, and
- significant financial and commissioning pressures within the residential care market.

The National Audit Office highlights that these market pressures directly affect the ability of local authorities to secure appropriate placements when they are needed.

### 3. Market and sufficiency pressures identified by Ofsted

The **Ofsted Annual Report – Children’s Social Care** identifies that local authorities across England face persistent difficulties in securing suitable residential placements for children, particularly those with complex emotional and behavioural needs.

Ofsted highlights:

- ongoing shortages of suitable children’s homes,
- increasing challenges in placement matching, and
- the impact of market instability and provider concentration on availability.

These national inspection findings confirm that the placement pressures experienced by local authorities in Yorkshire and the Humber reflect a wider and systemic problem.

### 4. Regional sufficiency evidence – Yorkshire and the Humber

The **English Local Authority Children’s Placement Sufficiency Analysis 2024/25** identifies continuing shortfalls in residential provision across many authorities and highlights:

- high levels of competition between authorities for placements, and
- a mismatch between where homes are located and where demand arises.

The supporting evidence confirms that these issues are clearly present across the Yorkshire and Humber region, where authorities are frequently required to place children at significant distance from their home areas due to a lack of appropriate local provision.

### 5. South Yorkshire and Barnsley context

The evidence confirms that **South Yorkshire authorities** continue to experience ongoing sufficiency challenges linked to socio-economic pressures and higher levels of demand for children’s social care services.

In particular, South Yorkshire authorities experience:

- continuing difficulty in sourcing appropriate local residential placements,
- regular reliance on placements outside their administrative areas, and
- increasing financial pressure arising from spot purchasing and high-cost placements.

As a South Yorkshire authority, Barnsley operates within this same constrained residential care market and is directly affected by these regional placement pressures.

Local safeguarding and vulnerability issues are also referenced within the **Barnsley Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report**, which is cited within the supporting evidence to illustrate local safeguarding demand and pressures on services for vulnerable children and young people.

## 6. Wider regional demand and cross-boundary placements

The supporting evidence demonstrates that demand for residential placements in South Yorkshire is not limited to Barnsley alone.

Authorities across:

- North Yorkshire,
- West Yorkshire, and
- the Humber sub-region

All experience similar shortages of suitable residential care provision and regularly rely upon placements across local authority boundaries.

For example, the evidence identifies that:

- West Yorkshire authorities experience high competition for a limited number of placements and significant reliance on out-of-area provision for adolescents with emotional and behavioural needs and safeguarding risks; and
- North Yorkshire authorities face additional challenges due to rural geography and limited local supply, resulting in children being placed at considerable distance from their home communities.

This demonstrates that children's homes within South Yorkshire form part of a wider regional placement network relied upon by multiple placing authorities.

## 7. Structural and socio-economic drivers of demand

The supporting document draws on research produced by **Health Equity North and the Child of the North All-Party Parliamentary Group**, which identifies:

- higher levels of child poverty and vulnerability in the North of England, and
- a clear relationship between deprivation and increased demand for children's social care and residential placements.

These structural factors contribute directly to the increased pressures experienced by local authorities across Yorkshire and the Humber.

## **8. Practical consequences of insufficient local provision**

The evidence confirms that the continuing shortage of suitable children's homes results in children being placed at significant distance from their families, schools and established professional networks.

The supporting document identifies that this can lead to:

- disruption to education,
- reduced opportunities for family contact, and
- difficulties in accessing health and support services.

It further highlights that small, well-managed children's homes are particularly important in providing stability for children who might otherwise experience repeated placement breakdowns and multiple moves.

## **9. Strategic importance of new provision**

Drawing together the findings of the:

- Department for Education,
- Ofsted,
- National Audit Office,
- Placement Sufficiency Analysis 2024/25, and
- regional inequality research,

the supporting evidence concludes that there is consistent and unmet need for additional children's homes across all sub-regions of Yorkshire and the Humber, including South Yorkshire.

The development of additional, high-quality children's homes is identified as a key mechanism for:

- enabling local authorities to meet their statutory sufficiency duties, and
- improving outcomes for children by enabling them to remain closer to their families, communities and support services.

## **10. Relevance of the proposed development at 99 Lang Avenue**

The proposed change of use of 99 Lang Avenue would directly respond to the issues identified within the national, regional and local evidence by:

- increasing the supply of children's residential care provision within Barnsley and South Yorkshire;
- providing small-scale, community-based accommodation suitable for children with emotional, behavioural and safeguarding-related needs;
- supporting Barnsley Council and neighbouring placing authorities who experience ongoing difficulty in securing appropriate placements; and
- contributing to a reduction in reliance on distant and out-of-area placements.

## **11. Conclusion**

The published evidence drawn from the Department for Education, Ofsted, the National Audit Office, national placement sufficiency analysis, regional inequality research and local safeguarding reports clearly demonstrates that there is a sustained and pressing need for additional children's homes across South Yorkshire and the wider Yorkshire and Humber region.

The proposed children's home at 99 Lang Avenue represents an appropriate, proportionate and policy-compliant response to this identified need and would make a positive contribution to improving placement sufficiency and outcomes for vulnerable children and young people.

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