

## **Next Step Independence residential home planning application response**

Families and Childrens Commissioning have seen an increase in the need for residential homes, impacted on by the Covid-19 pandemic and the sufficiency of foster cares. This is in line with national challenges, detailed in recent government reports:

[How local authorities plan for sufficiency of accommodation that meets the needs of children in care and care leavers - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/reports/publications/how-local-authorities-plan-for-sufficiency-of-accommodation-that-meets-the-needs-of-children-in-care-and-care-leavers)

The Ofsted report “How local authorities and children’s homes can achieve stability and permanence for children with complex needs” (January 2024) highlights to increase in the number of children who need a specialist provision to support their complex needs. It also acknowledges the lack of suitable homes available for children with complex needs, and the difficulty Local Authorities face in finding homes for them. Within the report 91% of local authorities say they often experience difficulties finding homes for children with complex needs.

Children with complex needs usually have a combination of multiple different needs that can include behavioural, mental health, learning, safeguarding, physical, social needs or have experienced significant trauma.

There are currently a higher proportion of children living in residential homes out of county. The outcomes for those children are best met in their community, where they will have consistency in regulated services and promote links to family and professionals in county.

There are currently 54 children and young people living in residential children’s homes, of which only 11 are in Wiltshire.

Wiltshire Council is part of the governments “Staying Close” programme and have allocated DfE funding to support young people to remain and return to Wiltshire. There are approx. 15 children and young people within this project, arranging transitions back to Wiltshire.

Alongside the Staying Close Project, Wiltshire Council was awarded DfE capital funding for a new residential block contract, which has been awarded to Next Step Independence, providing homes for up to 8 children in Wiltshire in dual registered homes (a maximum of two children in each home).

Calne has a low crime rate which is significantly lower the national averages (as detailed local crime information checks), making it an ideal location for children who are accommodated. There are strong links to local services, supporting young people to be safe in their community. -Calne is also the location of specialist school, The Springfield Academy, providing educational support for children aged 4-19 with additional needs.

Being in Wiltshire, there will be wider opportunities for the young people to engage in the community, education, health services, have recruitment opportunities and support from adult services and housing as they reach adulthood.

Residential homes should look, and be located, in the same area as any other family home. They should not look institutionalised and looked after children should be able to contribute towards their community in the same way other children do.

The home will be compliant with Ofsted registration but also fulfils the brief that this will be a family home for a very small number of children, who will be part of the community.