NEEDS AND DEMAND STATEMENT

25 Heathfield Road, BL9 8HB

Certificate of Lawfulness of Proposed Use - Maximum Two Children

Existing lawful C2 children's home - proposed increase from one child to a maximum of two children or young people

November 2026

Contents

1.0 Purpose, Scope and Evidential Status
2.0 Existing Lawful Use and Proposed Two-Child Model
3.0 National Need for Children's Residential Care
4.0 National Planning and Policy Context
5.0 Bury and Greater Manchester Sufficiency Context
6.0 Why Small-Scale Local Provision Matters
7.0 Contribution of the Proposed Two-Child Home
8.0 Relationship to the Lawful Development Certificate Test
9.0 Conclusion
10.0 References and Evidence Base

1.0 Purpose, Scope and Evidential Status

1.1 Purpose

This Needs and Demand Statement has been prepared in support of a fresh application for a Certificate of Lawfulness of Proposed Use under section 192 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 relating to 25 Heathfield Road, BL9 8HB.

The property already benefits from an established lawful Use Class C2 children's home use for one child or young person under Bury Metropolitan Borough Council application reference 73494. The current application seeks confirmation that the same family-style C2 use may operate with a maximum of two resident children or young people aged 7–18 years.

This Statement provides national, regional and local context on the continuing need for suitable residential care accommodation for looked-after children. It does not seek to turn the Lawful Development Certificate application into a planning-merits exercise. The determinative question remains whether the proposed increase from one to a maximum of two resident children would amount to a material change in the character or intensity of the existing lawful C2 use.

1.2 Evidence Date

This Statement is prepared in November 2026. At the date of preparation, the Department for Education's latest published annual children-looked-after statistics relate to the year ending 31 March 2025. The release for the year ending 31 March 2026 is scheduled for 19 November 2026 and is therefore not yet available for use in this application. More recent 2026 Ofsted provider data and Bury Council evidence are used where available.

2.0 Existing Lawful Use and Proposed Two-Child Model

The existing lawful planning use is a small C2 children's home for one child or young person, supported by non-resident care staff working on a rota basis. The proposed application does not establish a new care use; it would add one further residential place within the same existing home.

Matter	Proposed position
Existing lawful occupancy	One child or young person aged 7–18 years.
Proposed maximum occupancy	Two children or young people aged 7–18 years.
Placements	Planned and appropriately matched only; no emergency or crisis placements.
Routine staffing	Normally two non-resident care staff.
Maximum staff presence	Three staff/carers at any one time, inclusive of management attendance and temporary handover.
Residential model	Small family-style C2 home within one domestic planning unit.

The proposed increase is therefore modest in numerical terms: it would create one additional local residential care place while retaining a deliberately small-scale operating model.

3.0 National Need for Children's Residential Care

3.1 Latest Department for Education Evidence

The Department for Education's latest published annual statistics record 81,770 children looked after by local authorities in England on 31 March 2025. Although this was 2% lower than the previous year, the overall number remains historically high and materially above the level recorded in 2010.

Within that total, 9,480 children were placed in children's homes, including secure children's homes. This represented 12% of all children looked after and an increase of 9% (770 children) compared with 2024. The

data therefore shows that residential provision continued to play an increasing role within the overall placement mix even while the total looked-after population reduced slightly.

The same release records that 44% of looked-after children were placed outside their local authority boundary. Although the proportion placed inside the home authority improved slightly to 56%, the figures continue to demonstrate the challenge authorities face in securing suitable accommodation locally.

3.2 Placement Stability and Complexity

The 2025 national data records that 10% of children looked after experienced high placement instability, defined as three or more placements during the year. For children aged 5–16 with a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire score, 42% had scores categorised as a cause for concern. These measures illustrate the importance of stable, appropriately matched homes and support that can respond to emotional, behavioural and safeguarding needs.

3.3 Ofsted 2026 Provider and Capacity Evidence

Ofsted's Children's Social Care in England 2026 release shows continued rapid growth in registered children's home provision. As at 31 March 2026 there were approximately 4,750 children's homes in England offering around 16,200 registered places. This represented a substantial year-on-year increase in both settings and potential capacity.

Provision is nevertheless unevenly distributed. The North West had the highest number of homes and places, with approximately 1,250 children's homes and 3,580 places at 31 March 2026. Ofsted also notes that 26% of England's children's homes were located in the North West while only 18% of looked-after children came from the region. The existence of aggregate regional capacity therefore does not remove the need for careful local sufficiency planning, matching, proximity to children's communities and the right type of provision for individual needs.

4.0 National Planning and Policy Context

4.1 Written Ministerial Statement - 23 May 2023

The Written Ministerial Statement on planning for accommodation for looked-after children confirms the Government's commitment to supporting appropriate homes for vulnerable children and states that the planning system should not be a barrier to their provision. It emphasises the importance of stable homes close to children's communities where care is the appropriate option.

The Statement also recognises that planning permission is not required in every case involving a children's home and that the planning status of an individual proposal must be considered on its facts.

4.2 National Planning Policy Framework 2026

The National Planning Policy Framework published on 17 August 2026 now expressly identifies looked-after children within the groups whose accommodation needs should be assessed. Policy HO1 states that evidence of need for looked-after children can be found in the relevant local authority's Children's Social Care Sufficiency Strategy.

Policy HO7 gives substantial weight to the benefits of providing homes that contribute towards evidenced accommodation needs, while policy HO9 addresses specialist community-based accommodation and recognises the role of management plans and supporting evidence in demonstrating safe and secure arrangements.

These policies provide relevant context for the proposed two-child model. They do not displace the section 192 legal test, but they confirm that the need for looked-after children's accommodation is a recognised component of national planning policy.

5.0 Bury and Greater Manchester Sufficiency Context

5.1 Bury Housing Needs and Demand Evidence

Bury Council's Housing Needs and Demand Assessment 2024/25 identifies accommodation for looked-after children as a specific local need. It records that at the end of November 2024 there were 359 children in care in Bury, of whom 153 (43%) were in private provision, including foster care. The assessment refers to Bury's Homes for Children in Care strategy and to the Council's programme of strengthening local fostering and returning to direct provision of residential homes.

The same evidence identifies the Council's approval of proposals to open two local authority residential homes. This demonstrates that residential provision forms part of Bury's planned sufficiency response rather than being treated as an exceptional or inappropriate form of accommodation.

5.2 Bury Children's Services and Sufficiency

Bury's children-in-care self-evaluation reported increased use of residential homes, reflecting both the complexity of children's needs and insufficient foster-home availability. It recorded 48 Bury children in residential care at that point and described work to improve fostering capacity and develop local residential provision.

Ofsted's June 2025 inspection of Bury local authority children's services similarly recorded that sufficiency challenges remained under active consideration by senior leaders, with action being taken to increase the availability of homes that meet children's bespoke needs. Ofsted also noted the Council's zero-tolerance approach to unregistered children's homes, reinforcing the importance of properly regulated provision.

5.3 Current Bury Housing Strategy Direction

Bury's current Housing Strategy 2026–2036 material continues to identify children in care and care leavers as priority groups. It describes rising demand and increasing complexity of need, including neurodiversity and mental-health needs, alongside a shortage of foster carers for older children and those with more complex needs. The Council identifies greater reliance on residential provision, often in the private sector and sometimes outside the borough, as a consequence of those pressures.

The strategic direction is therefore to increase the range of stable and suitable local accommodation while supporting children to maintain important links with family, education, health services and their community.

5.4 Greater Manchester Fostering and Residential Pressures

In October 2026 Bury approved participation in the expanded Greater Manchester End-to-End Fostering Hub. The supporting decision records that Greater Manchester mainstream residential placements across provider types had increased by 41% over the preceding six years, while mainstream fostering placements had reduced. The report identifies continuing challenges in recruiting and retaining foster carers and the resulting reliance on residential care and external provision.

For Bury specifically, the 2025/26 Greater Manchester Fostering Hub generated 86 enquiries, 27 initial visits, 14 applications/assessments and three approvals during the year, with two further assessments ongoing. This illustrates that active recruitment does not translate quickly into sufficient additional foster capacity.

6.0 Why Small-Scale Local Provision Matters

Need is not simply a question of the total number of registered children's home places. Local authorities require the right type of placement, in the right location, with the right staffing and therapeutic environment for a particular child. A place that is available but unsuitable for a child's needs, education, safeguarding profile or community connections does not resolve a sufficiency problem.

Small family-style homes can contribute to a varied placement market by providing a setting that is more domestic and individualised than a larger group home. For some children, a small home can support consistent relationships, privacy, predictable routines and close adult support while still enabling ordinary community participation.

The proposed model at 25 Heathfield Road is particularly controlled: a maximum of two children, planned placements only, careful matching, no emergency admissions and a fixed staffing ceiling. This reduces turnover and supports a stable household rather than a high-intensity institutional operation.

7.0 Contribution of the Proposed Two-Child Home

7.1 One Additional Local Residential Place

The existing lawful use already provides one C2 residential place. The new proposal would add one further place within the same established home. The increase is therefore proportionate and makes more effective use of an existing lawful residential care setting without creating a larger multi-child institution.

7.2 Planned Matching and Stability

The Operational Management Plan requires each placement to be planned and matched, taking account of the needs of both children, safeguarding, education, health, family contact and the ability to operate within the maximum staffing envelope. A placement would not be accepted where the home could not safely meet the child's needs within those restrictions.

7.3 Community-Based Care

The children would live within an ordinary residential setting and be supported to attend education, healthcare, activities and family contact in accordance with their individual plans. This is consistent with the national and local objective of providing stable homes within communities rather than defaulting to distant or institutional provision.

7.4 Regulated Provision

The home would operate only through an appropriately registered children's home provider and would remain subject to the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015, Ofsted oversight and the operator's safeguarding and care-planning duties. The planning application does not replace those regulatory controls but works alongside them by defining the maximum physical and operational planning envelope.

8.0 Relationship to the Lawful Development Certificate Test

The evidence of need and demand in this Statement is contextual rather than determinative. The Council is not being asked to grant planning permission on the basis of social need or public benefit. The existing lawful use is already C2, and the section 192 question is whether increasing the maximum occupancy from one child to two would result in a further material change of use.

The need evidence nevertheless explains why a two-child family-style model is a credible and purposeful form of residential care and why local authorities continue to require a range of regulated placement options. The proposed increase is modest, planned and operationally constrained and does not change the fundamental nature of the established lawful use.

9.0 Conclusion

National evidence continues to demonstrate substantial demand for children's residential care. At 31 March 2025, 81,770 children were looked after in England; 9,480 were placed in children's homes including secure children's homes, a 9% annual increase; and 44% of looked-after children were placed outside their local authority boundary. Ofsted's 2026 provider data shows a growing residential sector, but also an uneven distribution of provision and a continuing need to match individual children to appropriate local homes.

Bury's own evidence identifies continuing sufficiency pressures, shortages in foster-home availability, greater reliance on residential provision for some groups of children and a strategic priority to increase the range of stable local homes. Greater Manchester evidence published in October 2026 similarly records a long-term increase in residential placements alongside reduced mainstream fostering capacity.

Against that background, increasing the existing lawful Heathfield Road home from one to a maximum of two resident children would make a small but meaningful contribution to the range of local regulated provision. It would do so within a deliberately restricted model: planned placements only, no emergency admissions, careful matching, a maximum of two resident children and a fixed staffing envelope.

The need and demand evidence therefore provides supportive context for the proposal. The ultimate determination of the Certificate of Lawfulness remains a matter of fact and law and should be made by assessing whether the proposed two-child operation would materially alter the character of the existing lawful C2 use.

10.0 References and Evidence Base

Department for Education (2025): Children looked after in England including adoptions, year ending 31 March 2025. Accredited official statistics, published 26 November 2025.

Ofsted (2026): Children's social care in England 2026 / Main findings. Provider, place and inspection data as at 31 March 2026; updated 30 October 2026.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2026): National Planning Policy Framework, published 17 August 2026; accessible version updated 29 September 2026. In particular policies HO1, HO7 and HO9.

UK Government (2023): Written Ministerial Statement HCWS795: Planning for accommodation for looked after children, 23 May 2023.

Bury Council (2025): Bury Housing Needs and Demand Assessment 2024/25, November 2025, including the section on looked-after children and the Homes for Children in Care strategy.

Bury Council / Ofsted (2025): Inspection of Bury local authority children's services, inspection 9–20 June 2025.

Bury Council (2026): Housing Strategy 2026–2036 material: Supporting People to Live Well and Independently at Home; priorities for children in care and care leavers.

Bury Council (2026): Cabinet decision, 14 October 2026: Proposed creation of an End-to-End Greater Manchester Fostering Hub.

Bury Metropolitan Borough Council: Planning record for 25 Heathfield Road, BL9 8HB, application 73494 - existing lawful one-child C2 use.

Important evidential note

The Department for Education's children-looked-after statistics for the year ending 31 March 2026 are scheduled for publication on 19 November 2026. They were not published at the date of this Statement and have therefore not been anticipated or estimated. The latest published annual DfE figures (2025) are used instead, supplemented by more recent 2026 Ofsted and Bury evidence.