Service Specification – MLB (544304

Open Advert Project Number – DN722152

**For young person who requires solo residential home within the North East.**

**If you are interested and would like further discussions with the care team please email** [**CYPSResidential@durham.gov.uk**](mailto:CYPSResidential@durham.gov.uk)

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| **Age** | 16 |
| **Gender** | Male |
| **Current Placement** | Unregulated placement with 3-1 staffing in Durham area |
| **Geographical location required** | North East |
| **Needs and presentation** | **Pen Picture**  MLB is a lovely, friendly young person. He is very sociable, chatty, and outgoing. He loves football, bikes, buses and his nana and grandad very much. His favourite football team is Newcastle United and he is often seen wearing different football kits regardless of the weather. MLB likes to socialise with other young people and he will seek to build friendships and relationship with his carers and workers also. MLB thrives on social interactions and this helps him to feel settled. MLB has a good sense of humour and will often make jokes and chit-chat with people when he meets people.  MLB also enjoys playing on his Xbox, he will arrange to play online with friends on Fortnite. MLB likes to take care of his appearance, he will spend around 1-2 hours each morning getting ready and he has a large collection of aftershave, something he enjoys wearing. MLB will often wear sportswear and often looks smart and neat.  MLB not only enjoys watching football and following his favourite teams, but he also loves playing football. He will play football in the back garden at his home, at the park and he goes to a football club once a week where he plays in an over sixteen team. MLB is a talented footballer and this is something he enjoys pursuing.  MLB is a keen leaner; he has told the social worker how much he wants to go to school and that he wants to go to college when he is older. He is currently having home tuition while we search for a school place for him and he enjoys this and works well with his tutors, he is working towards his foundations level 1 in Maths and English.  MLB has had quite a lot of placements in the past as he struggled to settle into being in care. MLB was initially placed in the Local Authority’s care after his grandparents signed a Section 20 for his as they felt they could not keep him safe at home. MLB was extremely upset by this as he believed he would shortly be returning to their care; however, this became a long-term situation as grandparents did not feel they could have him back. This led MLB to having lots of homes over a short period of time as when he is unsettled, the number of aggressive incidents is increased. When living in southern England, MLB was unhappy that he was away from his home area and frequently tried to return. Since coming back to the north East in July 2023, he has been much calmer and more stable. There have been very few aggressive incidents, no incidents of harmful sexual behaviour and only two missing episodes, this is a massive improvement in terms on MLB’s wellbeing. He is having regular family time and he engages in several hobbies and activities with his carers when he is not in his lessons. MLB has said he wants to live in a home with carers he can get on with and that is near enough to his grandparents to allow him to have regular family time with them as he is at present.  **Location**  Placement request is for a home in the North East only. Placements in supplementary areas such as Newcastle and North Yorkshire could be considered.  **Matching**  The social worker recommends that this search be made for a single child home or small bed home only. This recommendation is made with consideration given to the potential risk MLB poses to other regarding harmful sexual behaviour, aggression and based on how he has managed in placements with other children in the past and that he struggles in larger groups. Any placement with another child would need to be carefully matched and risk assessment considered in detail.  MLB likes animals and a pet in the home would be no problem.  Matching request would be that MLB needs to be with a child of a similar age or older, recommended same sex placement, possibly a child with similar level of understanding as MLB as he could be vulnerable if he was placed with a high risk young person with involvement in criminal behaviour or substance use.  **Learning needs**  MLB has an IQ of 68 and as such is deemed to have a learning disability and he also has a diagnosis of Autism as such he has additional learning needs.  He has an EHCP and requires a specialist provision. MLB has complex and unique special educational needs and a disability that impacts his ability to learn, they are autism spectrum disorder, learning disabilities and difficulties with speech and language. He has specific social and emotional needs, and he needs additional services, resources, and trained carer to effectively help him engage safely in the school day.  **Education**  Needs  MLB has an EHCP and requires specialist provision. Mainstream schools are inclusive of learners with special educational needs in their educational settings and they ensure that the needs of all students are addressed and that all barriers which hinder their participation are removed. They provide inclusive and accessible school structure, learning methods, teaching, and learning materials to support young people with special needs, however, if MLB were to be placed into a mainstream provision it would be to the detriment of other students attending there. MLB Lee has complex and unique special educational needs and a disability that impacts his ability to learn, they are autism spectrum disorder, learning disabilities and difficulties with speech and language. He has specific social and emotional needs, displays aggressive behaviour, and sexualised behaviours, has a diagnosis of childhood trauma which has an impact on his emotional development, and has motor coordination difficulties. He requires additional services, resources, and trained staff to help him engage safely in the school day effectively.  Support  At present, although MLB is not on a school roll, the social worker has decided with the virtual school for him to have tuition in the home. This equates to 15 hours of face-to-face tuition (over 5 days) per week. This reflects how keen MLB is to be in education and how much he wants to learn. This began in October 2023 and feedback from the tuition providers is very positive.  MLB has not undertaken any qualifications at present although he has expressed, he would like to go to college when he is in Year 12. When he was in his last school, he was working towards his level 1 Maths and English foundation however he did not achieve these qualifications. His current home tuition has continued this work with his online learning looking at Maths and his face-to-face English. MLB loves learning and really wants to go to school, the social worker is working to bring about a school place for MLB as soon as possible and will be seeking updates as soon as possible from the college he has been visiting, providers will be kept informed of this.  MLB had been having online tuition sessions since the beginning of October 2023, this ended when his hours were increased at the start of January 2024 as he will now be having entirely face to face learning. Feedback as provided by his tutors is that MLB has been making positive progress and is very keen to learn. He was completing English foundation lessons during these sessions. MLB has said he is enjoying these sessions so far and his carers have reported he engaged well with the face-to-face tutor when they visited him. MLB was completing Maths foundation lessons during these sessions. MLB's English lessons will now be completed by his face to face tutor as of 8.1.24.  MLB's engagement has been very good thus far; he has completed all his online and face-to-face lessons and he has been completing his homework for his online lessons every week with minimal prompting from his carers. MLB is always up and dressed and on time for his online lessons,, his carers report no issues with him attending the face-to-face lessons after his online lessons so far. This is ongoing until we find him a school place.  In terms of finding a school place for MLB, we have received a response to the school search for him from ESPA College Stockton, MLB has visited this school place three times on; 14.11.23, 6.12.23 and 14.12.23. The first visit was for an interview and the second two visits were for him to do taster lessons. The social worker has asked the college to confirm if they will be offering him a place and what this would look like in terms of supervision, however, they have said they cannot confirm this as of yet. It is hoped MLB will be able to attend this college and the social worker will continue to seek confirmation of this, it is hoped this will be provided before February 2024. If it is MLB is not offered a place, the social worker will look into expanding his offer of home tuition, a meeting is planned with the virtual school week commencing 11.12.23 to explore this. The social worker has a meeting in person with ESPA college on 11.1.24 to discuss this further.  Views  MLB has not undertaken any qualifications at present although he has expressed, he would like to go to college when he is in Year 12. When he was in his last school, he was working towards his level 1 Maths and English foundation however he did not achieve these qualifications. His current home tuition has continued this work with his online learning looking at Maths and his face-to-face English. MLB loves learning and wants to go to school, the social worker is working to bring about a school place for MLB as soon as possible and will be seeking updates as soon as possible from the college he has been visiting, providers will be kept informed of this.  ESPA Update  At the present time, MLB is having fifteen hours per week of home tuition as provided by Prospero Teaching, a service which has been sourced by the Virtual School. MLB's tutor attends every weekday on Monday between 1-3pm, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday between 12:30 – 3pm and Fridays between 11 – 2.30pm. MLB is currently completing Foundation Level One English and Maths and his hours are split equally between these lessons. This timetable began on January 8 th , 2024, and equates to fifteen hours a week of education, excluding breaks.  It should be noted that the tutor for these lessons is the same person who was completing MLB's seven hours of face-to-face lessons last term and so they know MLB quite well. Feedback has been gained from MLB's tutor on January 15 th , 2024, positive reports of his learning thus far were shared. It is noted that MLB has some issues with staying on track and focusing, that he is better at Maths than English and he is particularly good at arithmetic. MLB is reported to give up when he finds work difficult and lessons are planned around frequent breaks to suit his learning style more. Videos and games are also used in lessons to help break it up for him and keep him interested. MLB is reported to work well and creatively when he's engaged.  MLB's view on his current education provision is that he enjoys his lessons, however, he dislikes English and he would prefer if there was a reduction in hours as he finds having school each day challenging. MLB has requested that Friday session be cancelled, however, he's been informed this cannot happen currently as he needs to complete as many hours as possible so he can work towards his goals and qualifications. MLB has said he finds the lessons too long and he would like more breaks, his tutor has tried to accommodate this as much as possible by shortening his current breaks to be distributed across the day more, however, at present they are unable to offer further breaks.  In terms of his engagement with his increased education tuition since January 8 th , this has generally been positive, however, there have been two incidents during which MLB has refused to engage and the lesson has been ended early as such, this was on January 18 th and January 22 nd . On the 18 th , MLB informed his carers prior to his tutor arriving he did not want to do education today, this was discussed with the social worker and advice was given it should still be attempted as MLB needs to try his best to do as much as he can, this lesson was ended after around an hour as MLB refused to remain in the room with his tutor. On the 22 nd , MLB engaged well initially, however, towards the end of his lesson he began to ignore his tutor and was lying on the floor refusing to engage, this led to the lesson being ended around one hour early. The social worker has attempted to discuss these incidents with MLB, however, when seen last on the 22 nd , he refused to speak to the social worker about this. This will be followed up during a further visit planned for January 25 th and the social worker will encourage MLB to attend his lesson. His disengagement appears to correlate to when he has his English lessons.  Considering that MLB appears to be struggling to adjust to the increase in his hours and having lessons every day, the social worker does not think it is suitable to implement a further increase to twenty-five hours per week at this time. The social worker is aware this was discussed prior to the December hearing, which was vacated, however, given MLB's difficulties in adjusting to his new routine, there are concerns this may push MLB to refuse to engage further and lead him to become frustrated and this could aggravate his behaviour. The social worker would suggest a further increase should not be considered until MLB has had a period of stability under his current arrangement and recommends this be considered at the next hearing based on his progress over the new few weeks.  Regarding MLB's place at ESPA, there has been some progress made in confirming his place at the school since December 2023. MLB attended for a visit at the school on December 19 th and this was positive, he joined in with lessons and a game of football and was able to stay over lunchtime. At the present time, no further dates have been arranged as MLB has now attended five visits to the site and the social worker is concerned that if a place is not offered, this would be a disappointment to him and that further visits have the potential to unsettle him further if this transpires. Once a start date is offered, the social worker will speak to ESPA to arrange further visits if needed.  In terms of confirming MLB's place at ESPA, there have been some challenges to seeking clarity on this matter. To address this, the social worker organised a meeting with school staff, Durham County Council SENDCO team and the Virtual School on December 15 th . In attendance was the College Principal Mr Pat Cahill and College Co-ordinator Natalie Cowan, alongside the social worker, SENDO worker Mr Peter Nichol and Virtual School team manager Ms Karen Jeffery. ESPA discussed some barriers which had caused delay in offering MLB a place such as staff recruitment required to facilitate supervision and confirmation of expectations in terms of missing policies. Information was shared by the Local Authority regarding expectations of supervision of MLB, it was agreed that MLB could be supervised by school staff and that his carers from PCG would remain on site after dropping him off to support staff as needed. This would mean MLB would have 1-1 supervision on site by school staff, and that PCG carers would remain in a school office on site whilst he was in school to support as needed. ESPA's policy is that all their students have 1-1 supervision on-site and it is felt that the support from MLB's carers will allow them to facilitate this within school whilst also having additional support as needed, however, this will be in the least intrusive way possible for MLB as PCG carers will not be escorting him around site and will only support staff as needed if there was to be an aggressive incident or a missing episode. PCG carers have said they are happy to facilitate this and can remain on site as needed at ESPA.  During the meeting on December 15 th , ESPA advised they could not confirm MLB's place as this was dependant on staff recruitment, however, they advised they would update the Local Authority after the Christmas break as to if this could be confirmed. A further meeting was arranged for January 9 th to review progress made and confirm MLB's place where possible. The social worker contacted Ms Cowan on January 8 th to confirm the meeting could go ahead, however, they were advised that the school was experiencing staff shortages and it was proposed it be re-arranged to the 11 th . The social worker therefore decided for a meeting on the 11 th instead, however, on this date Ms Cowan advised that staff were still unavailable.  As a result of previous meetings being cancelled, a further meeting was planned for January 23 rd and attended again by previous attendees, excluding Ms Jefferies as Ms Alison Heal attended in her place, she is MLB's allocated Virtual School worker. During this meeting, ESPA shared that they could confirm MLB's place at the provision, they advised they were still in the recruitment processes and as such could not provide an exact start date however, they anticipated this would likely be shortly after the February half-term. It was agreed MLB's offer would be for three days initially, however, there is the possibility to increase this to five days dependant on his engagement and capacity to cope with this learning.  The funding for MLB's place was agreed at the end of February 2024, and he began at ESPA on 12th March 2024. MLB attends on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays, he is completing English, Maths and Science qualifications. Natalie Cowan, ESPA teacher, has advised in a recent care team meeting that MLB is doing very well and has settled in and is enjoying lessons. MLB's carers have said he is getting up well and there's been no issues with his routine. MLB has said he is really enjoying ESPA so far and that he likes the teachers and his lessons, he said he's been fine getting up in the morning and isn't finding the days too tiring. The social worker has discussed with him about attending for Y12, we will explore funding for this in June 2024.  **Health**  MLB takes an antihistamine every evening as a sedative to help him sleep, no other medication at present. No ongoing health treatment at present, MLB had a referral with CAHMS which was active between Oct-Nov 2023 as he wanted to explore an assessment for ADHD. CAMHS identified he has previously been considered for this assessment and it was deemed to be not needed, as such they closed his referral.  **Identity**  MLB has a Stockton accent and his white British, he is around five’10 and has an average build, short brown hair, and brown eyes. MLB identifies as a heterosexual male and associates with the northeast culture. He wears sports clothing and likes to take care of his appearance, especially buying lots of aftershave. MLB often will be seen wearing football kits and similar as he loves football and often wears different shirts each day of the week, his favourite teams are Newcastle and England.  **Family and relationships**  MLB lived in the care of his maternal grandparents for most of his life prior to coming into care and as such he sees them as his ‘mam and dad,’ he has a very close relationship with them, especially his nana, he has three phone calls a week with her and will tell her about his day and his plans for the week. MLB’s younger sister still lives with his grandparents and he will see and speak to her during calls and family time. MLB has monthly supervised family time with his grandparents and sister.  MLB also has family time with his mother, although she has care of his younger siblings and she is not always able to attend. MLB’s mother has been somewhat of an inconsistent presence in his life and she can be a ‘trigger’ for breakdowns in his mood. He will sometimes say he does not want to see and speak to her as she upsets him, this will often be if she is ‘let him down’ by not attending a family time or not doing something else she is promised.  MLB does not any contact with his father and does not wish to, he has had very limited relationship with him throughout his life and there have been suggestions his father sexually abused his mother’s younger siblings and as such the Local Authority would not support this without further risk assessment, it is not anticipated he will be in touch regarding seeing M as he has not done so at any point since he came into care.  **Social presentation**  MLB is a sociable young person; he has a playful nature and likes to have a laugh and a joke with his carers and social worker. MLB is chatty and responds well to interaction when he is not in a heightened state.  To meet MLB, you may not immediately realise he has additional needs as he presents like other young people his age, if not slight less mature, and he can talk about his hobbies, interests and make general chit-chat. Although his learning needs cause some communication difficulties in terms of processing, he is very articulate in terms of sharing his wishes and feeling and putting across his views.  MLB has come communication needs and struggles to always process information and take this on board, it is easier if complex processes are broken down into next steps for him as he finds this easier to understand, he struggles with abstract concepts and can be impatient if timeframes cannot be guaranteed.  MLB enjoys spending time with other young people and friendships are very important to him, he likes to be around people his own age and will also happily interact with those older than him.  MLB does not always understand risk, for example he recently asked if he could have a quad bike for Christmas and did not understand why this was not allowed as it is too dangerous and not something the social worker could agree for him. This makes him vulnerable in the community, although he is very capable in terms of getting around and he can easily use public transport, cycle from one place to another and he knows all the local bus routes, he does not always know how to keep himself safe and this may make him a target in the community. When he used to go missing when he lived in the south of England, he would attempt to get back to Durham as he wanted to be back in the North East, to do this he would approach people and ask for them to lend him money to get buses and so on, although there was no incidents in regard to this, it highlights how he could be vulnerable to exploitation and harm as he does not understand how this could place him at risk.  **Emotional and mental health needs**  MLB does not have any diagnosed mental health needs.  MLB tends to fixate on certain things, the social worker has assumed this is due to his autism as this lends to a compulsion to certain behaviours. A good example of this is MLB liking to go to a park near his house where his friends often visit. MLB often asks to go to this daily, carers have explained this might not be a good idea with the dark nights coming in and often when MLB has visited the park recently, he has been upset no other children are there, however, he still wants to visit every day. MLB asked if he could go on Christmas Day although carer has explained everyone will be at home because it is Christmas. MLB can become frustrated if he cannot access whatever it is that he is fixated on and this can lead to him becoming worked up, he may pace around the home, swear at carer, and get flustered. This can occasionally lead to aggressive behaviours such as pushing carer; however, MLB behaviour and aggression has significantly improved since he returned to the North East in July 2023. He has been having times out when he gets upset and carer will leave him to calm down when it is safe to do so. He will often regulate quickly afterwards and apologise to carer for his behaviour. MLB will often reflect on his actions and say he feels bad for being rude to carer and will apologise to them individually. Recently MLB has begun to reflect on his behaviour and ‘triggers’ such as recognising his mum had upset him and he did not want to see her at a planned family time as he was worried.  In terms of more significant behavioural incidents which are tiggered by MLB feeling upset and dysregulated, these tend to follow a ‘fight or flight’ pattern in that if extremely agitated, MLB may run away, these have been short, local missing episodes since his return to the North East during which time he has travelled around the local area and handed himself back into Police who have returned him home. After this, MLB has sometimes had to be restrained by carer as he has continued to be upset on returning. He does not have any sensory needs. MLB has not had any missing or aggressive behavioural incidents since December 2023.  **Cultural needs**  MLB celebrates Christian holidays such as Christmas, however, he does not practice any religion.  **Self-care skills**  MLB can do some of his basic care such as washing and dressing himself, he is able to plan his daily routines and outline activities he would like to do and share this with his carer. He does not like cooking very much and will often buy his lunch from either Subway or McDonalds. Carers have been encouraging MLB to plan his weekly food shop and to do more cooking, the social worker has provided carers with some educational resources to help them support MLB with this. Carers are currently completing a life skills booklet with MLB to help explore his level of self-care skills.  MLB enjoys activities such as bike riding, going to the gym and going shopping. MLB also goes to recreational centres such as bowling a go-karting when his weekly budget permits this. MLB has recently begun to visit the gym several times a week, he goes to Chester-Le-Street Leisure Centre which is approximately five minutes away from his placement by car. He has a pass to this centre and can go as often as he wishes. He is supervised by carer during his time at the gym and the carer will also use equipment in the gym. MLB enjoys doing cardio exercises and weight training.  MLB attends a youth football club in Stanley once a week on Thursday evenings, MLB has been playing for this team since shortly after arriving at his current placement in July 2023 and he enjoys this as football is a keen hobby for MLB. The carers have recently informed the social worker that MLB may be changing to the over-sixteen teams as he has currently played on the below-fifteen team, however, the coaching carer have suggested that he can play for the older team now he is sixteen. The sixteen-plus team plays on Thursday evenings also so this would not be a significant change to MLB's routine.  As discussed, MLB has a very good knowledge of transport networks, this is related to his wish to become a bus driver when he is older. He would be likely be able to use public transport well if needed, however, at present he is transported by carers as needed and so he does not need to travel independently.  **Placement needs**  We want MLB to have a home in which he can settle. He benefits from consistent routines and boundaries as well as positive relationship with carers who will get to know him and that take an interest in his hobbies. MLB would need to be in a home on his own as he has previously had issues with settling with other young people due to his own vulnerabilities. We want a home for MLB in the North East that could provide care for him until he transitions to adulthood and that would teach him self-care and life skills to help prepare him for adulthood. We would want a home that could respond to MLB’s more challenging behaviour in a calm and measured way to help settle him and prevent escalations of his behaviour. We want carers that would build strong and stable relationships with MLB as loss is a significant trigger for him getting upset and his behaviour declining. MLB would need a regular carer team who were able to build relationships with him and provide him with nurturing. We also want MLB to access therapeutic support to address the trauma he has experienced during his childhood and that a therapeutic approach to parenting was undertaken to meet MLB’s needs and to help understand his behaviour. MLB would need 2-1 carering minimum; he currently has 3-1 however the social worker is of the view a reduction could be explored dependant on the placement being the right fit for him. A plan for this supervision would need to be agreed with the home prior to him moving in.  **DOL**  We had further hearings for Micky's DOL on 20.2.24, 4.3.24 and 21.3.24. A Final Order for 12 months was made on 21.3.24, the following trajectory has been agreed in terms of finding a provision for Micky post-18 and his transition plan:  March - May 2024: The social worker explores and engages with providers, as recommended by Dr Beattie, to provide harmful sexual behaviour risk reduction services to Micky. In the same time frame, Micky's carers undergo further training on harmful sexual behaviour and Autism.   June - Sept 2024: Micky completes work with providers regarding harmful sexual behaviour. This is on the assumption he engages.   September 2024: Micky turns seventeen. The social worker gathers his views on where he wants to live. If he wants to live with family, the social worker will explore and assess this as an option. The social worker will amend and update Micky's placement search referral to search for suitable supported accommodation, a change from the search for a residential placement.   September 2024 - March 2025: The social worker continues to search for a new placement for Micky, to move him by the time he is seventeen-and-a-half. The social worker will be assisted in this by Micky's young person advisor, family, and other relevant services. The DOL Order would expire in March 2025 if granted for twelve months from the current date.   March – September 2025: Micky is supported to settle in his new accommodation and prepare for a change involvement from services post-eighteen. During this time, the social worker will seek support from the Adult Services ongoing, and carers will complete life skills work with Micky to help prepare him for adulthood. |

**If you are interested and would like further discussions with the care team please email** [**CYPSResidential@durham.gov.uk**](mailto:Placements@durham.gov.uk)