

SUPPORTED ACCOMODATION FOR CHILDREN IN CARE AGED 16-18

To: Children and Young People's Committee

Meeting Date: 5th December 2017

From: Helene Carr, Interim Head of Service, Access to Resources

Electoral division(s): All

Forward Plan ref: 2017/030 Key decision: Yes

Purpose: To update the committee on the provision of Supported Accommodation services for young people in care aged 16-18, and to seek agreement to go ahead with a planned procurement exercise.

Recommendation: That the committee supports the planned procurement activity and the strategic intentions with regard to providing these services.

<i>Officer contact:</i>		<i>Member Contact</i>	
Name:	Helene Carr	Name:	Cllr Simon Bywater
Post:	Interim Head of Service	Post:	Chairman, Children and Young People Committee
Email:	Helene.carr@cambridgeshire.gov.uk	Email:	Simon.bywater@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel:	01223 703891	Tel:	01223 703286

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 What do we mean by Supported Accommodation?

Supported Accommodation for children in care aged 16-18 can be defined as:

‘A safe, stable place to live, where accommodation is provided alongside support. Young People are supported to develop or sustain their ability to live independently as outlined in their Pathway Plan. For example, they may require support with accessing education, training, and employment, addressing anti-social behaviour, mental health difficulties and developing their self-esteem and independence skills’

These services are provided as part of a continuum of care, and are provided as an option for young people in care between the ages of 16-18, alongside foster care placements and supported lodgings. The services work to support young people to develop the skills needed to live independently. They help us to fulfil our responsibilities under The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 to plan for looked after children, so that they have the support they need as they make the transition from care to adulthood.

1.2 Current Commissioning Arrangements

The current contract for Supported Accommodation is a framework contract with 11 providers that offer tailored support, based on the individual needs of each young person, in line with their support plan. Placement prices vary widely, reflecting the wide landscape of service requirements that the framework is expected to fulfil.

This contract expires on 31st July 2018. We also spot purchase from providers who are not on our framework contract, when we cannot access appropriate placements from the framework.

These are unregulated services, not subject to Ofsted inspections or monitoring by any Other registered body. Services are monitored by the Access to Resources Team (ART).

Ofsted have recently written to all Local Authorities advising that they have undertaken an inspection pilot in Supported Accommodation provision and all nine services that were inspected have been instructed to register as Residential Children’s Homes. Additionally, we have been instructed to consider the type of support requirements and demands we are placing on supported accommodation provision, ensuring that we are not forcing or allowing providers to work outside the parameters of a supported accommodation offer, and within the parameters of a regulated Childrens Home. Through commissioning, we will move away from services that have a 24/7 staffing model, and focus much more on individual support packages that are dependent on need to ensure our providers will not need to be registered as Childrens Homes.

Current Spend

1.3 The amount spent on Supported Accommodation during the 2016/17 financial year was just under £1.4m (£1,379k). The total number of placements this corresponds to are 97.

This does not include Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children’s (UASCs) placement costs as they are recorded separately and funded from a different budget. 71 UASCs

were placed in supported accommodation in 2016/17. £1,273k was spent on supported accommodation placements for these young people. The majority of this is reimbursed by the Home Office.

Why do we need these services?

1.4 A review of Housing Related Support and Supported Accommodation provision for 16-25 year olds in Cambridgeshire was undertaken in the first half of 2017. The aim of the review was to look at the strengths and gaps in the whole system and identify how to best commission quality services for this age group. The review involved working with young people, district councils, social workers and providers. Key findings with specific relevance to supported accommodation included:

- It is imperative that we have supported accommodation available in county, as young people need to have a local connection to be eligible for housing in Cambridgeshire post-18. Therefore, if they have not been resident in county for a period of time prior to turning 18, they will not be able to apply for housing through one of the local district councils.
- We need to ensure that young people have safe, stable accommodation that enables them to access education, any health services they require and to maintain relationships with friends and family where appropriate.
- We know that even with the drive to keep young people in foster care, through Staying Put arrangements, and the emphasis locally on increasing Supported Lodgings capacity we will always need this type of provision to accommodate young people who have previously lived in a residential Childrens home who need the opportunity to develop independent living skills and for whom neither Staying Put nor Supported Lodgings are appropriate.
- Cambridgeshire has a need for resilient 16+ provisions better able to manage young people with complex and challenging behaviours, to help reduce the number of placement moves for this cohort of young people.

2. MAIN ISSUES

2.1 Level of Use of current services and Forecast Demand for services in future

The People and Communities Sufficiency Statement (Children in Care and Care Leavers) 2017-2020 provides the supporting data that evidences the need for these services going forward.

Data tells us that 2015/16 saw a significant increase in the number of supported accommodation placements made. This is likely to be linked to the increase in the number of 16 and 17 year olds who were looked after in the same period. The increase has put pressure on and impacted capacity within our supported accommodation and housing benefit sustainable provisions

The number of young people being placed in supported accommodation has increased from 4% (22 young people) at the March 2015, to 12% (79 young people) at March 2017. In the period April 2016 – March 2017, 158 referrals were made for supported accommodation provision, 68 of which were emergency referrals (required within 24

hours).

Similarly, fostering providers, including our in house service, have been unable to manage demand of placements for this cohort of young people. In the same period 24 referrals were made for fostering placements for 16 and 17 year olds; only seven of these placements resulted in a suitable fostering placement, and only two of those were with our in house service.

The sufficiency statement includes financial forecasting, based on current numbers of children in care and predicts what the impact will be on future numbers. Based on what we know about our current population of 16-18 year old young people in care, they makeup approximately 20% of all children in care, and the forecasts which show that demand is set to increase over the next few years, we can estimate that the number of 16-18 year olds requiring accommodation will increase by an average of 5 young people per year over the next five years.

2.2 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

At the end of March 2017, 73% (49) of unaccompanied asylum seeking young people were placed out of county. Of those 49 young people in placements outside of Cambridgeshire 36 are in supported accommodation provisions (the majority of which are in Peterborough).

Most unaccompanied asylum seeking young people are assessed as being 16/17 years old and are placed in supported accommodation provision (the majority of which are in Peterborough). Monitoring visits to young people happen within statutory timescales, but these young people can experience social and cultural isolation as a result of language barriers and being at a distance from their home authority. For some communities however, Peterborough may be a less culturally isolating place to be accommodated than other parts of Cambridgeshire.

These young people are supported to access health and education services in the same way as all other young people in care. However, there can be challenges in obtaining good information about their family history such as medical conditions. All young people have health assessments and access treatment as needed. The Virtual School support UASC to access Education as a Second Language courses, but enrolment can take several weeks and this causes frustration for young people who are keen to learn and progress. Work is underway to improve links with local colleges and speed up the admission process for our unaccompanied asylum seeking young people. We need to ensure that as well as meeting their housing needs, we are meeting their social and education needs.

2.3 Issues with Current provision

Several key issues with or current supported accommodation are set out below. The main issues are concerned with capacity and quality. The two issues are not distinct.

A lot of the placements made in these provisions are made on an emergency basis. Typically emergency referrals are for young people where either little is known about them or there has been a significant issue within their placement that has led to immediate notice being called, therefore their referral often presents them as being high risk or high need and therefore harder to place in provisions where support and

supervision is minimal. If this is to continue, we must ensure we support providers, so that the placements are sustainable and young people are supported and have stable placements. Emergency placements tend to be more costly than placements purchased through a contractual framework, so financial pressure is a key driver with regard to trying to reduce the number of emergency placements made.

We know we are reliant on Supported Accommodation providers in Peterborough at the moment, particularly for our Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) population, and there may need to be work done to stimulate the market, and generate interest from providers wishing to enter Cambridgeshire to deliver services.

The market is quite fragile, and we are limited in terms of the properties that providers have access to, and the locations where they can source accommodation for our young people.

We need to improve our performance monitoring so that we have a good sense of what outcomes are being achieved and can be confident in the quality of the support we commission.

Issues vary from provider to provider, but include:

- Issues with referrals not being accepted by providers, due to matching issues, or providers being considered to be 'risk averse'.
- Negotiation of fees for bespoke packages and problems with ensuring young people receive the support hours we are paying for.
- The location of some services can present additional issues, for example in Cambridge City, supported accommodation provision has been adversely affected by issues related to anti-social behaviour.

2.4 Future Solutions

Through a commissioning exercise we will ensure:

- Sufficient capacity for the most difficult to place young people. This will mean ensuring that providers have staff who are well trained and able to support young people's needs, and that the providers are linked in with all other services supporting young people so they can work as part of a network to meet needs. For example, we could perhaps create a pool of staff that can support providers when they are facing placement breakdowns, or commissioning additional support at the stage when young people are settling into a placement. This would follow the North Yorkshire model, where their No Wrong Door staff provide support to externally commissioned support accommodation providers when required.
- Quality accommodation that we feel confident placing young people in.
- We develop a new service specification and performance monitoring processes to ensure that the outcomes we set out for the service to achieve are being achieved for young people.
- The specification will be co-produced with young people.
- We will develop performance monitoring processes that involve young people living in the accommodation, so that their experiences and views directly inform

continuous service improvement.

- Options for a payments by results model to be explored, in order to ensure we have robust ways of achieving good performance.
- Consistent support packages, so we are clear what is being provided for the cost, and can make comparisons between providers, and be confident in the quality of support offered by different providers.
- More capacity across the county, so that young people can be enabled to stay in education, employment or training, access any relevant health services and maintain relationships with family and friends where appropriate, and we are not overly reliant on provision in Peterborough and Cambridge City.
- We anticipate that we need to include capacity for UASCs over the next 3-5 years, within our supported accommodation that we commission from external providers. We do not consider it to be beneficial to commission a specific UASC service, but instead, will meet the needs of this group of young people within the provision we commission. It is anticipated that the most appropriate places to house UASC young people are Peterborough, Huntingdon and Cambridge City, due to these being cities with amenities that can meet the educational and cultural needs of these young people.

2.5 How will we achieve this?

Timescales need to allow for engagement with the market, and to test and see what models providers would bid for.

We need to ensure that any new model we design is based upon robust data about need.

We will develop a service specification that is outcome focussed and supports service delivery across the districts, making all relevant links and ensuring that this provision is a part of a whole system of support services for our most vulnerable young people in Cambridgeshire, so that money is efficiently spent and services work effectively together.

We will ensure that education, employment and training opportunities and health outcomes for young people are prioritised.

We will simplify the service offer, so that professionals working with children in care understand what supported accommodation is, and what the offer will be for young people accommodated there.

We will ensure that our service specification falls in line with expectations from Ofsted.

2.6 Cost savings that could be achieved through this commissioning exercise

The option of jointly commissioning these services with Peterborough City Council may present opportunities to make saving due to economies of scale in terms of the size of the contract we would seek to commission.

Also, as we already rely on providers in Peterborough, our colleagues at Peterborough City Council may also be contracting with them too, and it could be more efficient to do

this together.

In terms of performance monitoring, jointly commissioning across the two authorities would ensure we can cover all performance monitoring easier, and reduce the burden.

There must be a recognition of the Staying Put agenda and the development of the supported lodgings offer. These services could in time reduce the need for supported accommodation. There would need to be some financial forecasting carried out to provide specific details of any savings that could be made.

2.7 **Recommendations**

A commitment is to be made to continuing to procure these services.

The budget is to be agreed from 2018/19 onwards (as it stands the budget has been set at £1.2 m for 2017/18 but the expected spend at year end, based on current placements at September 2017 is £1.8m). However, extensive work is ongoing with providers to reduce costs, ensure young people are being enabled to develop independence skills which negate the need for high levels of support. For example, the Looked After Children (LAC) properties (2 x 16+ accommodation and support facilities offering 8 accommodation options) has as of August/September 2017 offered placements to 6 young people, some of whom have moved from higher cost 16+ provisions. Negotiations with providers are ongoing and through this process and appropriate move-on options at a lesser cost are being identified.

Through re-commissioning, we are confident that we will achieve a reduction in off-contract placements that have to be made, often at greater expense. We will also be able to use the opportunity to negotiate fees for packages of support when awarding contracts. Close links are to be made with the Housing Related Support service development work, which is being undertaken jointly with adult commissioners, to ensure that move on for young people from supported accommodation to local benefit sustainable housing is facilitated.

2.8 **Procurement Timeline**

A paper was submitted and approved at the Joint Commissioning Board (JCB) in September, the key points of which are:

- Develop a joint commissioning approach with Peterborough TACT partnership
- Co-produce a service specification and associated appendices (performance monitoring pro-forma, UASC specific requirements, accommodation quality standards etc.) by January 2018
- JCB Update February 2018
- Tender issue February 2018
- Contract award July 2018

3. **ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

3.1 **Developing the local economy for the benefit of all**

The following bullet point set out details of implications identified by officers:

- Providers of supported accommodation will be encouraged to deliver services within Cambridgeshire. This could lead to the creation of jobs within the county. Also, if young people are accommodated in county, our young people will be able to access employment or education locally, thus realising economic benefits on several different levels.

3.2 **Helping people live healthy and independent lives**

The following bullet point set out details of implications identified by officers:

- The aim of supported accommodation is to prepare young people in care to live independently once they reach the age of 18. Service providers will be expected to achieve clearly defined outcomes for young people that are support their attainment of independence skills and ability to fulfil their potential within the adult world.

3.3 **Supporting and protecting vulnerable people**

The following bullet point set out details of implications identified by officers:

- Children in care and care leavers are one of the most vulnerable groups in society and research indicates they are more likely than the general population to experience adversity in adult life. Providing good quality supported accommodation options at age 16-18 will give them the best opportunity to achieve positive outcomes in adulthood.

4. **SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 **Resource Implications**

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- There is a need for a commissioned service able to meet the range of needs that young people have as they approach adulthood, within budget.
- We will shape the market so that new and existing providers are able to develop the service offer in line with need and expectations.
- It is anticipated that efficiencies can be achieved through re-tendering for these services, and economies of scale achieved through working with Peterborough City Council. Many of the more expensive placements we make are off-contract placements. If we have more robust contracted provision we will not need to look elsewhere and will have more control over the fees we are paying.
- A Commissioning Officer will be identified to lead on this work from January 2018 onwards, overseeing the procurement exercise and the implementation of the new contracts.

4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- A full competitive procurement exercise will be undertaken, in line with county council policies, and EU procurement regulations. The Joint Commissioning Board has already given its approval for this work to commence and expects to approve all the tender documents in February 2018.
- The procurement timeline has allowed for market engagement, co-production and an outcomes based approach will be taken when developing the service specification.

4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- Providers and stakeholders, including young people, will be involved in the future design of the services by attending consultation events and they have already completed a survey and attended some face to face meetings that will inform the service specification.

4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.7 Public Health Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

Implications	Officer Clearance
Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?	Yes Name of Financial Officer: Martin Wade
Have the procurement/contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by Finance?	Yes Name of Financial Officer: Paul White

Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by LGSS Law?	No Name of Legal Officer:
Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?	Yes Name of Officer: Will Patten
Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?	No Name of Officer:
Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact?	Yes Name of Officer: Will Patten
Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health	No Name of Officer:

Source Documents	Location
None	