

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting16th March 2017

1. Title of Item/Report

Accommodation for Care Leavers and Homeless Young People

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report on Accommodation for Care Leavers and Homeless Young People.

The report provided an update to Members on the work that had taken place since a report came to Cabinet in July 2016 around the accommodation needs of care leavers and homeless young people.

The report also updated Members on the Government Review of Supported Housing.

There was a legal requirement for the Council to provide suitable accommodation to care leavers and homeless young people aged 16 and 17.

Since July 2016, a small working group, led by the previous Director of Children's Services, had met to discuss the identified needs for accommodation for care leavers and homeless young people in the Borough.

The group was comprised of representatives from Children's Services, Housing, Finance and Children's Commissioning (Public Health).

The group had considered all of the children looked after 16 plus who either were or would become eligible care leavers in future years with a view to projecting need for accommodation – this included 130 care leavers and 62 sixteen and seventeen year old young people in care.

There had been an increase in young people looked after "staying put" within their foster placements and where it was known this would be the plan for looked after children who would become care leavers this had been factored in.

The number of staying put placements was 19 and it was predicted that

would increase by a further 12 over the next 24 months (19 expected to start and 7 expected to cease) and there may be further pressures thereafter. Whilst this was seen as very positive practice for the young people this would put increased pressure on the Supported Accommodation budget to the value of £60k in 2017-18 rising to £120k in 2018-19 and would also mean a number foster placements would not be available to other looked after children.

The breakdown of Supported Accommodation was attached to the report. It was felt that this level of Supported Accommodation should meet the needs of young people.

A review of all of the Supported Accommodation receiving payment of Housing Related Support funding made by the Local Authority had been led by Julie Nixon. Representatives of the Children's Working Group had also been part of this work.

A report outlining that work to date went to Cabinet on 19 January 2017 – Commissioning of Short Term Housing Related Support Services. The report highlighted that new revised contracts would come into place by July 2017 – this would include those services for children and young people.

Access to supported accommodation for young people aged 16 and 17 or care leavers is following an assessment of need by the lead worker (Personal Advisor or Social Worker) and a subsequent referral to Youth Accommodation Panel.

The panel sat every 3 weeks and considered referrals for emergency accommodation in retrospect, requests for planned supported accommodation and requested for priority banding for those young people ready to take up their own tenancies independently via Choice Base Lettings, and was a direct link to the housing 'Gateway' in respect of access to other all commissioned accommodation and if needed additional floating support.

The panel was managed and chaired from Children's Services (Resource Team), however the membership was wider and included providers of young people's commissioned accommodation and support and other relevant services including the link to the 'Gateway' via the Housing representative, Youth Direction, Leaving Care and Youth Offending.

Accommodation was not considered in isolation, there was recognition that for young people to be successful in their transition to independence, the right support must be in place at the right time and this support should be holistic hence the wide membership of the panel.

Having membership on the panel from Housing and a link to the Housing 'Gateway' supported seamless move on plans for young people and was a mechanism that promoted timely decisions re-tenancies through Choice Base Lettings and priority banding reducing the risk of delay. This promoted a smooth transition from accommodation provided for young people to accommodation provided for adults.

Since the report to Cabinet in July 2016 the Ofsted Report – Single Inspection Framework had been published.

Ofsted looked at the outcomes and experiences of children who may become homeless and also of services for care leavers.

The Sub-Judgement for the Experience and Progress of Care Leavers was Outstanding – as of January 2017 only 5 Local Authorities out of 117 Local Authorities inspected.

Ofsted noted the following in the report:

- Care Leavers at University are supported to return to their chosen living arrangements in the area at holiday times.
- Strong partnership arrangements were evidenced that ensure that virtually all care leavers move onto suitable accommodation of their choice and when they are ready to do so. At 90% this is well above that found nationally. (The current figure is 89%.)
- Young Inspectors review all semi-independent accommodation to check that it is of a suitable standard and somewhere that they would want to live.
- Accommodation and living needs are addressed well because of the effective youth accommodation panel and services that tackle young people's needs holistically and ensure the right support is put in place.
- Care Leavers are encouraged to remain in supported placements beyond the age of 18 and an increasing proportion do so.
- The number of staying put arrangements had doubled from 2014/15 to 2015/16. Young people value the support they get and there are an increasing range of transitional flats and supported living arrangements which provide an effective transition into independence.
- Young people value the work of the dedicated weekend support worker as well.

Between April 2016 – January 2017, there were 24 referrals relating to 21 young people (3 young people referred into the Department on 2 occasions as being homeless). Of the 24:

- 12 young people went to live with other family members – with support offered by the Local Authority;
- 2 young people were provided with emergency short term accommodation and then returned home within a few days;
- 2 young people were found accommodation, but declined to become looked after;
- 4 young people became looked after;
- 1 young person is currently in supported accommodation and will become looked after;
- 2 young people were not deemed to be homeless following an assessment by the Social Work Team;
- 1 young person staying with extended family for short period whilst accommodation sought.

Ofsted noted the following around Services to Homeless Young People:

- Service and support for young people aged between 16 and 17 who become homeless or at risk of homelessness are very comprehensive.
- There are excellent multi-agency arrangements and a range of services are offered to ensure that any vulnerable young person will be offered a holistic assessment, appropriate accommodation and if required and agreeable to them, will become looked after by the Local Authority.

Government had recently released a consultation paper regarding how in future (from 2019/20) it proposals to fund supported housing. 'Supported housing' covered a range of accommodation some of which was short term (with the aim of managing crises / rehabilitation / providing a stepping stone to independent living) and some of which was long term (and supports individuals to live independently in the community). The types of people in supported housing included vulnerable young people such as care leavers and homeless young people. The details were attached to the report.

The costs of supported housing were frequently higher than mainstream housing for a variety of reasons (higher maintenance, repairs and rates of turnover, the specific characteristics of residents, the inclusion of communal areas and facilities such as enhanced security etc.). At present rents and eligible service charges were covered via the payment of Housing Benefit (or Universal Credit), however in future Government

proposes to limit the payment of the core rent and service charges up to Local Housing Allowance rates and for this to continue to be funded through Housing Benefit (or Universal Credit). Government then proposed to devolve funding to Local Authorities to provide additional 'top-up' funding to providers, reflecting the higher average costs of offering supported accommodation. This funding would be ring-fenced and the 'top-up' would be set on the basis of projections of future need.

A piece of work was being undertaken (involving a range of officers across Finance, Social Care and Housing) to identify the impact of these proposals on the Council, on commissioned housing providers (including supported accommodation services provided to young people) and on both current and potential supported housing tenants. A bespoke report would be presented to Cabinet once this exercise had been completed and additional information was released by Government.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The report be noted.
2. Further reports be received updating Cabinet on the potential funding implications for Children's Services when the new arrangements come into place for funding Housing related support.
3. Reasons for the Decision

Best practice indicates that a multi-agency approach is the most effective way of making decisions about how best to deal with children and their families to secure the best possible outcomes.
4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.
5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

Councillor Mike Smith declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 13 - Accommodation for Care Leavers and Homeless Young People as a family member had applied for an Accommodation Grant.
6. Details of any Dispensations

N/A
7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Midnight, 24 March 2017

Proper Officer
20 March 2017