

**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO  
CORPORATE  
PARENTING BOARD**

**DEC 2021**

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR  
OF CHILDREN'S  
SERVICES**

**POST 16 AND CARE LEAVERS SUPORT AND ACCOMMODATON REPORT**

**SUMMARY PURPOSE**

This report will provide the Corporate Parenting Board with an overview of the arrangements for supported accommodation for our care leavers, young people aged 16 and over and any young person at risk of becoming homeless in Stockton. Specifically:

1. To provide a summary on use of supported accommodation provision during Sep 20 and Aug 21, including any specific trends, capacity considerations and the responses of the Local Authority to meet demand.
2. To update on the monitoring and assurance arrangements that our young people are placed in good quality accommodation.
3. Report on the progress of the commissioning contract arrangements for supported accommodation (following the extension ceasing in October 2020) and provide an update with regards to future planning and challenges ahead.

**Supported Accommodation Provision**

The Local Authority use a range of provisions and providers to meet the needs of young people who require support and accommodation. The use and demand for such provision is directed by social work assessment of individual needs alongside any secondary considerations such as capacity and placement risk management.

The Local Authority currently has 100% nomination rights with two commissioned supported accommodation providers. These provisions provide young people with a self-contained one-bedroom flats/bedsits with 24-hour staffing on site.

- Parkfield Hall (provided by North Star), which provides 10 flats/units plus one emergency crash pad
- 155 Norton Road (provided by Sanctuary), provides 6 flats/units plus one emergency crash pad

The 2 crash pads, one at Parkfield Hall and another at 155 Norton Road provide emergency, short term rooms (with access to support). This supports the Local Authority to provide safe accommodation for those young people most risk and avoids the inappropriate use of unsuitable accommodation such as bed and breakfast.

Additionally, the Local Authority may also spot purchase supported accommodation from other providers. This option is typically used in circumstances where there is insufficient capacity, or the needs of a particular young person cannot be met by the commissioned providers. The Local Authority also provides a Supported Lodging Scheme and has delivered this successfully for several years. In addition, young people in foster placements can 'Stay Put' in their foster placement after the age of 18. Other arrangements include 'Staying Close' arrangements. The Local Authority have 2 children's homes with adjoining flats and 2 flats in the same block as another of its homes which are used flexibly dependant on need including for care leavers who become parents and may need the additional support or oversight.

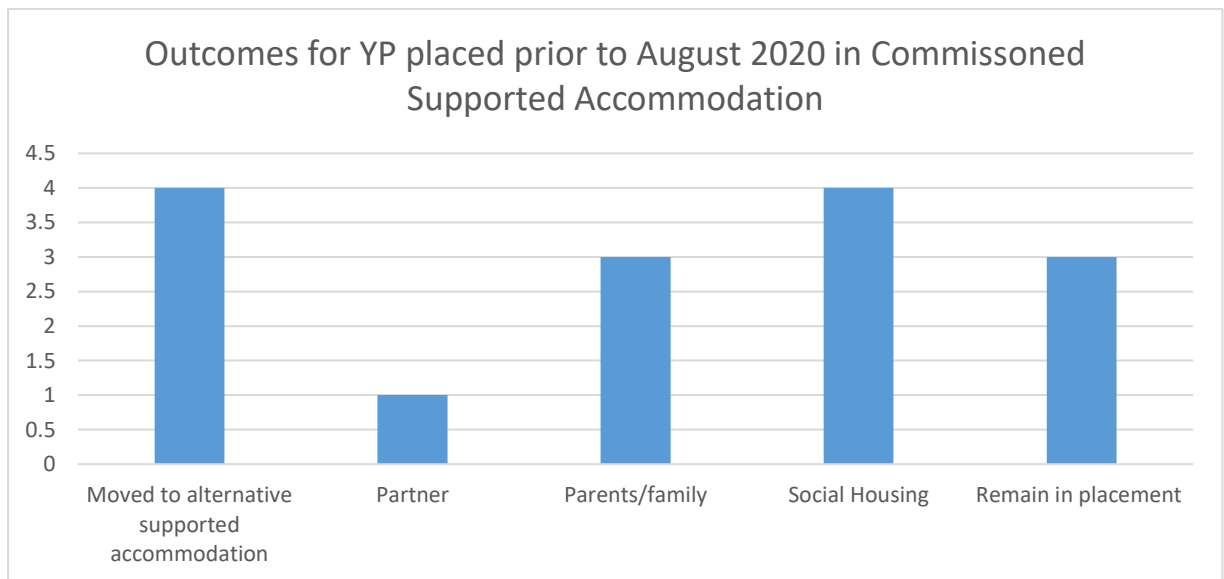
### Capacity, Trends, and Demand

44 young people have accessed either spot purchased provision and commissioned services over the past year. 18 YP have accessed the Crash Pads during the past year. This remains comparable to usage in the previous year (Aug 19 – September 20) in which 19 YP accessed the service.

Use of supported accommodation services over the past year has remained high and placements have been running at full capacity. Young people can remain in supported accommodation for up to 2 years. Whilst many do not require this length of time to achieve a positive move on, for some it is required.

In addition, due to the Covid 19 pandemic, during lockdowns, it became very difficult for provisions to provide the direct support that they would have previously. This has impacted on young people being able to move as swiftly as they did in previous years.

Prior to the beginning of August 2020, there were 15 YP who remained in a **commissioned placement** from the previous year. The table below, shows the outcomes for these YP from these services:



- 57% (8) of the 14 YP moved on to successful arrangements either in their own properties or with family/parents or partners
- 3 YP that remain in placement are currently in the process of moving on to alternative arrangements
- 3 of the 4 YP that moved to alternative supported accommodation did so due to the closure of St James House. 2 of these YP moved to another commissioned accommodation service, whilst 1 moved to a spot purchased provider.
- Only 1 of the YP who moved to alternative accommodation did so due to previous placement being unable to meet their needs.

The number of new admissions to our commissioned services this year is 17. These are young people that have either moved on from a previous care placement or from a temporary accommodation such as a Crash Pad. The chart below shows the numbers of YP and placements that they have accessed in comparison to last year.

Provider	No. YP placed Aug 19 – Sept 20	No. YP placed Aug 20 – Sept 21
Parkfield Hall	13	8
155 Norton Road	9	9
St James House	8	NA (decommissioned Oct 2020)
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>17</b>

The chart demonstrates a significant reduction from last year in which 30 young people had accessed services during a similar time frame. However, this is not due to demand for the services decreasing but external factors such as:

- Covid 19 – as previously noted, the pandemic and lockdowns have impacted on the level of support available to young people in helping them prepare for move on. Additional factors have included the impact on young people’s emotional health during the pandemic, which has impacted on whether they feel ready within themselves to make the move to fully independent living and assessments and workers support this.
- Similarly, the impact of the pandemic has led to more difficulty in moving YP on to their own accommodation due to landlord’s being unable to carry out repairs required, move other tenants on, etc limiting housing stock availability. This issue has now been largely resolved as landlord’s learned to work in the ‘new normal’.
- There has been a decrease in 6 units of commissioned accommodation since October 2020. The demand for these units has not disappeared and alternative spot purchasing methods have been required to meet the ongoing demand.
- Placements are longer term and stable, offering young people the chance to grow in their accommodation and move on when they feel ready.

The Local Authority anticipated an increase in the use of spot purchased provision due to the closure of St James House. Additionally, as noted in numerous published reports, including one by the Children’s Commissioner there are growing concerns around suitable accommodation and support options for high need teenagers, which Local Authorities are struggling to commission provision for. These two factors have contributed to surge in demand for spot purchasing.

The table below shows the numbers of YP that have accessed spot purchased accommodation.

Provider	No. of placements made (Aug 20 – Sept 21)
Roc Solid	1
Forever Care	3
Prefer Homes	7
Sunningdale	3
Indigo Support	3
Midway Transitional Solutions	1
YMCA	1
Cura Living	1
Community Campus*	6

This is a total of 26 placements made relating to 21 young people.

In comparison, this is an increase of 30% in the last year, of overall placements (previous placements made was 20). However, the number of YP has increased from 10 to 21. Whilst this is a significant increase, the factors previously mentioned have dramatically impacted on these numbers. There are some additional factors to consider also:

- The placements at Midway Transitional Solutions and YMCA were planned placements, arranged for young people who had been living outside of the Stockton LA for some time and wished to remain living away.
- Community Campus is a provider that we have engaged with to provide dispersed properties with floating support to help mitigate the loss of 6 units. So far, they have provided the LA with 4 flats in which we placed 6 young people. 2 of these young people have since successfully moved on to University accommodation.
- Prefer Homes has always been a service used by SBC for young people. They have accepted 7 placements and have successfully moved 2 of these on.
- Providers continue to be very reluctant to accept young people who are at risk of becoming criminally exploited and in some cases could be considered on the 'edge of secure'. Over the last couple of years, we have worked hard to forge understanding relationships with providers to increased access capacity to meet the needs of these young people. These providers include Sunningdale, Indigo Support and Cura Living.
- We have also experienced challenges with placing young people with poor mental health and who can make allegations. These needs can be difficult to manage in group living environments, therefore by utilising providers that are smaller or solo, we have had increased success in settling and stabilising these young people. (Sunningdale and Community Campus)
- There are also challenges sourcing suitable accommodation for those young people who struggle in group living environments and also require high staffing ratios to keep them safe. The Local Authority has established good relationships with particular providers in the North East – Forever Care and Indigo Support who have demonstrated they can meet this level of need.

The above issues have created an increase in our overall use of spot purchasing. However, the Local Authority is confident that despite this increase, spot purchased providers are appropriate and able to meet the needs of the young people placed with them.

### **Monitoring and Assurance Arrangements of Supported Accommodation**

Supported accommodation is not required to be registered with Ofsted at this time. However, the DFE recently announced intentions for all accommodation for 'Looked After Children' and Care Leavers aged 16/17 to be regulated by Ofsted.

The Local Authority have and continue to do as a matter of routine, undertake robust monitoring of all supported accommodation providers, whether commissioned or spot purchased, to ensure accommodation and support is suitable and of a high standard.

All placements into these services are tracked and overseen within the Resource Team and all barring one, have been formally monitored by the Resource Team in the last year. The remaining provider was delayed due to Covid related issues and has since been completed. Plans are in place for ongoing monitoring visits.

Evidence from the monitoring visits confirms that the accommodation is of a high standard, support is appropriate, and that robust risk assessment and management oversight is in place. Feedback from young people about the accommodation and support during these monitoring visits has been positive.

There were no placements made in Bed and Breakfast provision or unregistered children's homes during the period Sep 20 and Aug 21 and we are continuing our commitment to not place any 16/17-year unsuitable accommodation.

### **Commissioning/re-tendering process 2020/21**

Work has continued to re-commission our supported accommodation services, following the failed tender process in summer 2020 and subsequent loss of St James House.

Following additional market research and collaboration within our colleagues in Early Help and Development and Procurement, a service spec was produced to enter a partnership approach to supported accommodation for young people. The specification is underpinned by a shared vision between providers and SBC, strong working relationships, use and implementation of Valuing Care, and a range of accommodation and support options that can meet the needs of the young people of the borough.

The tender process is in advanced stages with award of contract expected imminently. It is anticipated that the new contract, for a minimum of 12 units, will be able to mobilise by April 2022. These units will complement the existing 10 units at Parkfield Hall. We will also continue to have access to the two Crash Pads.

### **Future Plans and Challenges**

Stockton-On-Tees Borough Council is well prepared for changes in demand for the service and is actively looking at how we can meet these challenges. Some elements to consider are:

- Recommissioning the remaining 12 units of accommodation with a proposal that can meet the needs of our young people journeying through and leaving care. It is anticipated that this service will be up and running by April 2022. This will ease pressures on spot

purchased placements, as well as offering alternative models and methods of support which will lead to improved outcomes.

- Continue to work with local providers to explore a range of accommodation options that work for our young people. This includes the development of an 'edge of secure' residential care model, longer term lets, floating support services, and increased out of hours support to enhance our offer to young people aged 16 and over.
- Young people at risk of Child Criminal Exploitation or those with links to known Organised Crime Gangs continue to rise. The vulnerabilities of these young people cannot be discounted, and we need to work with all agencies to ensure we have appropriate accommodation and services that can monitor and manage these risks in area. We know that out of area placements are not always the solution. Contextual safeguarding meetings have been held when concerns have arisen regarding a group of YP or particular area. In addition, we are introducing new processes within our MACE team (formally VEMT) to address these concerns and look at how these YP can be kept safe in the community. Work is ongoing in terms of developing our joint venture model with SPARK and enhancing our residential care offer to young people on the 'edge of secure'.
- Continue to implement and review the Valuing Care assessment process and use this to effectively measure progress and outcomes for young people and the changing needs of this cohort of young people in Supported Accommodation will assist in measuring progress on an individual level and also shape future service development.
- Continue to avoid the use of B&B accommodation for 16/17-year-olds and care leavers.
- Prepare for impending Ofsted Regulations within Post 16 settings and work with the Government, Ofsted and providers to ensure we are ahead of the game as these plans come to fruition.

## Feedback

Over the past year, much work has been carried out to strengthen the Local Authorities' support and response to young people in need of supported accommodation. This has included:

- **Revision of our Joint Protocol for responding to Homeless 16- and 17-year-olds** – key changes including strengthening our joined-up approach with the Homelessness and Housing Solutions Team, ensuring that all YP receive a Homelessness Reduction Assessment as well as a social care assessment, whilst ensuring all government guidance is up to date, relevant and being followed.
- **Creation of a Joint Housing Protocol for Care Leavers** – This policy informs how the Local Authority will support and respond to housing needs of care leavers (including those at risk of homelessness and from outside of the Stockton area).

In addition, SBC was invited to engage with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to discuss our existing policies, procedures, and implementation of support to homeless young people and care leavers. This process involved the DCS, ADCS, service leads, team managers and front-line practitioners across both Children's Services and Homelessness and Housing Solutions within SBC.

Feedback around our Care Leavers JProtocol was very positive and the MHCLG has requested permission to share with other LA's as an example of good practice.

Revision of our response to Homelessness 16/17-year-olds continues with feedback from the MHCLG being taken onboard to strengthen this.

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