

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES **Prepared by Jonathan Fawcett Accommodation & Placement Support Team** **Lead Officer, Jo Lee Service Lead Childrens Care and Complex Needs**

SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION – REPORTING PERIOD 1st OCTOBER 2021 – 30TH OCTOBER 2022

1. SUMMARY PURPOSE

- 1.1 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 homelessness in Stockton-on-Tees. Specifically:
1. Provide a summary on the use of supported accommodation services, including a snap shot of young people accessing the service and assurances around suitability of these placement for the young people.
 2. Update on monitoring and assurances arrangements
 3. Sufficiency and commissioning updates, including areas of need and development to ensure appropriate services for young people
- 1.2 The report will consider data and activity between 1st OCTOBER 2021 – 30th SEPTEMBER 2022

2. TYPES OF SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION

- 2.1 For the purpose of this report, supported accommodation will cover all unregulated placements for young people aged 16-25, including Children in Our Care and Care Leavers. The services that Stockton-on-Tees Brough Council has access to, includes:
- Building based services, these are blocks of flats that young people hold tenancies for and have access to 24/7 support on site.
 - Supported Lodgings, these placements are family based and the young person has access to support from the adult host and use of the hosts household facilities.
 - Dispersed services, these are properties in the community which offer 'floating' support
 - Stay Close arrangements, these are flats attached or within close proximity to residential homes and the young person living there holds a license agreement.

- Bespoke arrangements, these are spot purchased for individuals, usually solo placements in rented accommodation that the young person holds a license agreement for and the support provided is dependent on specific needs

3. ACCOMODATION AND PLACEMENT SUPPORT TEAM UPDATE

3.1 The Accommodation and Placement Support Team is responsible for sourcing and monitoring the quality of the Supported Accommodation that Stockton-on-Tees Brough Council offer our young people. The Children's Services review concluded in March 2022 and led to increased capacity within the Accommodation and Placement Support Team, formally known as the Resources Team. Those changes included:

- 1x Additional Accommodation and Placement Support Officer
- 3x permanent Link Workers
- Additional responsibilities included the transfer of support for Support Lodgings Placements and Staying Put arrangements (where no other CIOC remain in placement) into the team.

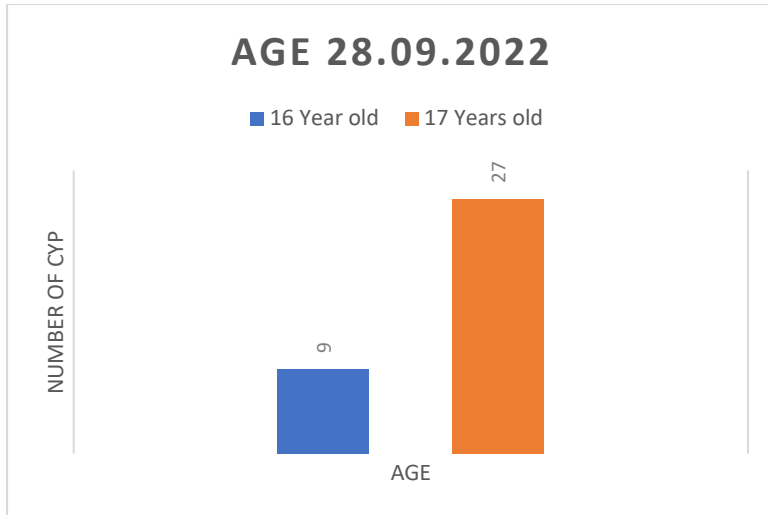
3.2 The team's long standing Weekend Support Worker left their role in July 2023. The weekend outreach support provided by this worker to our young people living in Supported Accommodation, has transferred to the Link Workers and is now also available during the week on evenings if needed.

4. OVERVIEW OF USE OF SUPPORTED ACCOMODATION

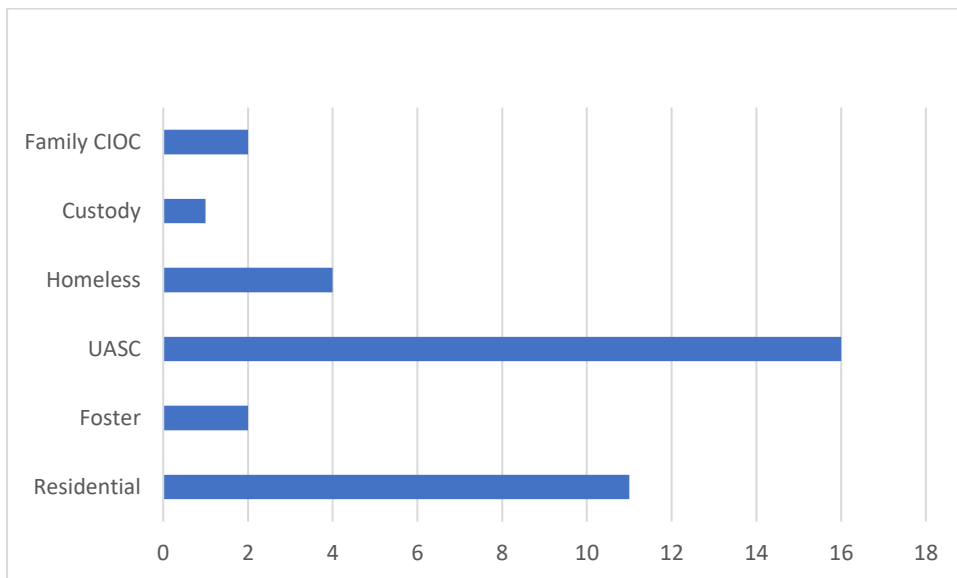
4.1 During the period of 1st October 2021 and 30th September 2022, there have been 63 placements made into supported accommodation for a total of 53 young people.

4.2 As of 28.09.2022 there were a total of 42 young people placed in Supported Accommodation of which 36 were Children in Our Care aged between 16 and 17 placed in supported accommodation. In addition there are 17 Care Leavers living in University type accommodation and 34 Care Leavers who have stayed put with previous foster carers.

4.3 The chart below give a breakdown of age of these young people:



4.4 The chart below provides information of the care setting or previous living arrangement for these young people immediately prior to their transition into Supported Accommodation:



4.5 This data demonstrates that the demand for Supported Accommodation placements are primarily for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children of which there were 16. A high number of placements were made for those young people transitioning from residential care settings of which there were 11. The remaining 9 placements combined, were made for young people transitioning from foster care placements, family breakdowns which left the young person homeless or from custody.

5. SUITABILITY OF PLACEMENTS

5.1 The Post 16 Valuing Care Assessment is a tool that helps identify need and provides evidence of a young person's strengths across a number of domains that could support a plan to live in a Supported Accommodation setting. This

assessment tool is, where possible, completed prior to any move into such a setting. The outcome of the assessment is presented at the Accommodation Panel in order to match the young person to the most appropriate type of Supported Accommodation service to meet need and assure the right support is in place that assist's the young person, on their continued journey to independence.

- 5.2 The Accommodation Panel is multi-agency and members are representatives from the following areas:
- Accommodation and Placement Support Team
 - Youth Justice Team
 - Education (Virtual School)
 - Homelessness and Housing Solutions Team
 - Leaving Care Team
 - Qualified Social Worker (currently from the Fostering Service)
- 5.3 Currently, 28 of the Children In Our Care aged 16/17 and living in supported accommodation have Post 16 Valuing Care Assessments in place.
- 5.4 Of the remaining 8, the reasons for the Post 16 Valuing Care Assessment not being in place are:
- 2 young people required accommodation in an emergency to avoid being homeless and were previously known to services therefore there needs were understood by the active worker.
 - 6 of the remaining young people are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children that came to us via the National Transfer Scheme. There is limited information available at the time of transfer and therefore it is assumed these young people will require a high level package of support. These high level packages of support can be provided through a bespoke spot purchased service or from a building based service.
- 5.5 For those young people who are placed in such circumstances and without a Post 16 Valuing Care Assessment in place, one is requested and once complete will inform the continued suitability of the placement and highlight any need for adjustments to be considered.
- 5.6 Placements in Supported Accommodation are tracked through the Accommodation Panel where the progress of young people towards independence is considered and plans for transitioning to independence are progressed.
- 5.7 The document, Request For Supported Accommodation, has recently been refreshed and moving forward will be based on the Valuing Care framework

which once implemented, will assist further in ensuring Young People are in the right type of accommodation with the right level of support quicker.

6. HOMELESS 16 & 17 YEAR OLDS

- 6.1 Stockton-on-Tees Brough Councils response to homeless 16/17 year old young people continues to be appropriate. Officers continue to work with the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) via their Youth Homelessness Advisor whose role is to provide ongoing advice and support around improving working practices and guidance for homeless 16 and 17 year old young people. The Local Authority's existing Care Leaver's Supported Housing Protocol has been recognised by the DLUCH as good practice and has been shared with other Local Authorities by the DLUCH as a standard of practice to achieve.
- 6.2 Numbers of Young People who are provided with accommodation via the homelessness protocol continue to be relatively low. The Local Authority's response remains appropriate in offering young people a safe place to stay while services work with them and their families to formulate longer term plans. The use of Bed and Breakfast Accommodation for young people remains zero.
- 6.3 The majority of young people who present at homeless following a family breakdown and failed attempts to be reunified, do take up the offer of becoming a Child In Our Care. This status ensures appropriate ongoing support remains in place post 18 via Leaving Care Services. However some young people decline this offer despite the benefits being explained to them. As of 29th Sep 22, Stockton-on-Tees Local Authority is supporting 5 young people in Supported Accommodation under our homelessness duty. All are placed in suitable Supported Accommodation.

7. CARE LEAVERS

- 7.1 The Local Authority continue to offer suitable and appropriate accommodation for our Care Leavers. The length of stay in Supported Accommodation is flexible and young people can remain up to the age of 25. Therefore young people can enter a service under 18 and remain post 18, reducing the potential for dropping off a 'cliff edge' as they transition to adult hood. As of the 29th Sep 22, there are:
- 11 Care Leavers (aged 16-25) living in Supported Accommodation settings other than a family type
 - 4 Care Leavers (aged 16-25) living in Supported Lodgings which is a family based setting
 - 34 Care Leavers have remained with foster carers under a Staying Put arrangement

- 17 Care Leavers are accessing support from the LA to financially support their accommodation costs whilst at University. This number is likely to increase as more applications are currently being considered

7.2 Care Leavers who are ready to move into their own independent housing, can access financial and practical support from the Local Authority. The Accommodation and Placement Support Team can provide a link to social landlords or private rental accommodation.

8. MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

8.1 Supported Accommodation services are not currently regulated and as such, it is the responsibility of the Local Authority to ensure that the Supported Accommodation services accessed by our young people are of a good standard, provide good quality support and have relevant policies and procedures in place. This supports the ongoing safeguarding of our young people. To gain these assurances, a suitably experienced member of the Accommodation and Placement Support Team is required to visit and audit all Supported Accommodation services in use by Stockton Borough Council, at least annually. The visiting member of the team will consider elements of the service, including:

- Location of the accommodation - is it accessible, close to transport links, education services, local area, etc
- Support provided – does support meet the needs of the young people in placement, how is it provided and recorded, is progress being made, etc
- Standard of the accommodation – is the accommodation suitable, safe and appropriate for young people
- Safeguarding – how does the provider keep our young people safe, are risk assessments up to date
- Working with others – does the provider work well with the Local Authority and other agencies
- Tenancy/Licence Agreement – does the young person have a tenancy or agreement to live there, does the young person understand the expectations of them
- Internal monitoring – how does the provider ensure staff are appropriately vetted and trained, how does the manager oversee the service, etc.

8.2 In addition, feedback from young people in placement is sought at the visit (ideally alone) and feedback from Social Workers and Personal Advisors is also obtained.

8.3 The information gathered is inputted into a report and any recommendations made. This is shared with the provider, who are offered an opportunity to respond. It is then shared with any placing Social Workers or Personal Advisors of the young people in placement at that time. A copy is also kept centrally by the Accommodation and Placement Support Team for future records.

- 8.4 Any concerns or issues raised are directly addressed during the visit and feed into the report. In addition, any good practice is highlighted. Any significant or immediate safeguarding concerns would be raised immediately with the placing Social Worker and Safeguarding Procedures followed. Of note there has been none highlighted at these visits during this reporting period.
- 8.5 9 supported accommodation providers have received a monitoring visit in this reporting period and all were within timescales. At these visits, assurances have been gained that all are suitable and appropriate for the needs of the young people placed. There are 3 providers that require a visit within the next 3 months to remain in timescales and these will be arranged accordingly by the team.
- 8.6 In addition to these monitoring visits, all Supported Accommodation services accessed by our young people, have regular case management discussions with the Accommodation and Placement Support Team. These discussions sit outside the care planning process but could be linked if this was appropriate for some individuals. The discussions focus on the group of young people in placement and the purpose is to support the provider to deliver the best service they can to our young people. The discussions help to facilitate positive working relationships, help identify any issues within placements or to consider possible referrals back to panel to look at move on options.
- 8.7 The officers from the Accommodation and Support Team facilitates quarterly Provider's Meetings for both supported accommodation providers and supported lodgings providers which are hosted by the Local Authority and is a forum where all local providers used by Stockton Borough Council can get together, network, share good practice and learning, discuss trends, working processes. Guest speakers are invited to share information about their services and local issues, guest have included local police, MACE workers, etc.
- 8.8 For our Supported Lodgings and Staying Put placements, the team offers regular supervision with providers on a one to one basis regularly.
- 8.9 The DFE has announced plans to regulate all Supported Accommodation for Children in Care and Care Leavers aged between 16 and 17 from Autumn 2023. Stockton-on-Tees Brough Council has engaged in discussions with Ofsted around these plans and provided a view through the national consultations that have taken place. The Accommodation and Placement Support Team continues to work with providers of Supported Accommodation in Stockton-on-Tees in order they are supported to be registration and inspection ready.

9. SUFFICENCY AND COMMISSIONING

- 9.1 Pressures and demands for Supported Accommodation continues to be high. The implementation of the National Transfer Scheme has further added to this pressure. We know that there is an overreliance on 'spot purchased' Supported Accommodation services, which are costly and not always in area. The Accommodation and Placement Support Team continues to work closely with our colleagues in Procurement, Commissioning, Housing and Improvement to look at ways to improve our sufficiency, increase our capacity and offer an outstanding service to young people who need this service.
- 9.2 There is currently work underway to commission 3x shared houses which can accommodate 2 young people each, this will be for exclusive use of UASC. These houses will be within the Stockton-on-Tees area and the commissioned provider will employ a dedicated worker with the skills and experience needed to support UASC.
- 9.3 Other activity to increase capacity in Supported Accommodation includes:
- Commissioning a minimum of 6 accommodation units to meet ongoing demand for supported accommodation. The model for this service will ideally be a 'Hub and Spoke' model, offering a 24/7 staffed building with the 6 units of accommodation that is linked to a range of dispersed properties in the community with floating support.
 - Marketing campaign to increase capacity in our in house Supported Lodgings scheme. There will be a focus on the recruitment of providers that can support UASC and higher need young people
 - Improve our response to 16/17 year olds that are homeless or threatened with homelessness, via improved early identification and enhanced working with Homelessness and Housing Solutions Team and Help and Support Services
 - Strengthen our working relationships with Homelessness and Housing Solutions, Youth and Targeted Support and Social work teams to help early identification and prevention work for young people threatened with homelessness
 - Continued tracking and review of the suitability of placements in Supported Accommodation for all young people living in these settings via Accommodation Panel, using the Post 16 Valuing Care Assessment tool to support transitions to independence are timely.