

Meeting: Housing Committee

Date: 19th November 2018

Wards Affected: All

Report Title: Care Leavers and Homeless Young People's Commissioning Proposal

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1. Proposal and Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out initial proposals to develop a framework of supported accommodation and support services for young homeless people aged 16 to 25, including care leavers and those to whom the Council owes a statutory responsibility. It takes into account relevant issues raised in the recent Ofsted inspection.
- 1.2 An officer board has been established whose aim is to address the shortage of supported accommodation options for young people and increase sufficiency of local provision in line with our statutory responsibilities under the Children Act and other legislative requirements.
- 1.3 As well as addressing our statutory responsibilities there is an opportunity to make savings in the cost of children's placements for young people aged 16+ by driving down costs of provision, by commissioning a new framework of a pipeline of different services to suit young people's varying needs, with contributions from Joint Commissioning Team (JCT), Children's Services and Housing

2. Background

2.1 Legislative requirements:

- *Children Act 1989 Sufficiency Duty* (to have a sufficient range of accommodation for children in care and care leavers) and the extended obligations towards care leavers up to the age of 25 outlined in the Children and Social Work Act 2017
- *New guidance issued in May from Ministry of Housing and Local Government and Department of Education regarding duties to accommodate young people aged 16/17* – if accommodated for 24 hours or more automatically become a Child Looked After which impacts on the Authority's LAC numbers and consequential duties.
- *Housing Act 1996 part VII, the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017* and related Code of Guidance

- 2.2 The new guidance relating to homeless 16/17 year olds, Ofsted scrutiny and a visit from the Government’s Homelessness Advisory Support Team earlier this year highlighted that the needs of some young homeless people were not being met. Ofsted recommended that *“all 16 and 17 year-olds who present as homeless are assessed by social workers and that they are aware of the option of becoming looked after.”* A subsequent review of cases led to an increase in the number of 16/17 year olds becoming Looked After, creating further pressure on existing accommodation provision such as Torbay Foyer and Supported Lodgings and increasing costs.
- 2.3 Children’s placement costs are significantly more expensive than the lower level supported accommodation commissioned by the JCT. Costs can vary significantly between £860 per week to £3,500 per week per placement. **The average weekly cost is £1600.** The total spend for the last three years is as follows:
- 2016/17 Spend: £341,680
 - 2017/18 Spend: £730,156
 - 2018/19 Spend to date: £733,054
- Projected spend for 2018/19 is £1,323,000 by the end of the financial year.**
- 2.4 In comparison, weekly costs for supported lodgings and the Foyer are in the region of £160 per week. Whilst these service models are aimed at lower levels of need and complexity, the £1400 per week variance in price suggests there is potential to work with the provider market to develop different services to facilitate a gradual step down from care and move on into independent accommodation.
- 2.5 So far in 2018/19 there have been 70 Children’s Services placements into “16+” provision (number at 31/10/18). This is already double the total number of similar placements made in 2017/18 which was 35.
- 2.6 Additionally, due to the shortage of suitable available commissioned provision, some young people are placed in emergency temporary accommodation by Housing Options at significant cost to the Authority. The table below sets out the level of demand for Housing Options temporary accommodation from 1st January 2017 to 30th September 2018:

	Number of 16/17 year olds	Number of 18-24 year olds
1/1/17 to 31/12/17	50	128 (17 repeat placements)
1/1/18 to 30/9/18	19	71 (8 repeat placements)

The 128 placements in 2017 contributed part of the total actual spend on temporary accommodation of £284K. Projected spend for 2018/19 is expected to be around £311K.

- 2.7 Children’s Services have analysed their numbers of known Looked After Children who will reach 16 over the next few years (that is those that are currently in the system and will become 16, these numbers will increase as new young people

become Looked After). There is a considerable potential cost pressure in this area that these proposals would seek to address.

- 2.8 There is increasing pressure on the supported accommodation that is available, such as the supported lodgings provision, to meet “step down” demand from care leavers. However there is insufficient funding in the JCT budget to commission to meet demand and comply with statutory duties including the Sufficiency Duty.
- 2.9 There is also lack of affordable move on options for young people leaving supported or 16+ accommodation. Social housing supply is limited and private rented is usually the only option for young people in Torbay. A single person under the age of 35 living in private rented housing is normally only entitled to housing benefit at the Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR) which is the local rate for renting a single room in a shared house. This applies even if the accommodation is a self-contained flat. Deposits and rent in advance make accessing private rented accommodation extremely challenging for young people even if they can afford the rent. There is a need to develop ways to improve access to the private rented sector for young people.

3. Potential ideas for further development

- 3.1 Use of Community Housing Fund to address the critical issue of move on for care leavers and other YP either through allocating funds from the current money that the Council already holds from CHF; or by way of a new application which has to be made by a Registered Provider. To meet community housing fund criteria it must be a project that brings together young people into a group that would be involved in identifying and meeting their housing needs through a development project.
- 3.2 Torbay Council to act as guarantor for care leavers and vulnerable young people to facilitate access to private rented accommodation; and explore ways of expanding deposit bond scheme.
- 3.3 Develop a Landlord’s Forum and work with willing local private sector landlords to understand and address the issues they have around accepting young people; building relationships with key landlords or estate agents.
- 3.4 Develop a “matching service” for young people for house shares in the private rented sector.
- 3.5 Utilise Government funding stream (Access to Private Rented Sector Fund) that is currently available which may support the work outlined above if we are successful in a bid.
- 3.6 Explore options for extending contracts with Torbay Foyer, Supported Lodgings and the Young Parents Service.

4. Recommendations:

- 4.1 That Housing Committee endorse the direction of travel for 16+ accommodation set out in the submitted report.

- 4.2 That the Committee supports the development of a partnership commissioning plan and specification for a young people's pipeline of services.
- 4.3 That the Director of Adult Services and Housing be requested to determine the appropriate the decision making process in order to progress the ideas set out in section 3 of the submitted report.