

Cabinet Member for Children – Start of Life

April 2016

Procurement of county wide accommodation for young people leaving the care of the Local Authority and vulnerable young people.

Report by Executive Director Care, Wellbeing & Education and Director of Family Operations

Ref No: CH01 (16/17)
Key Decision: Yes
Part I
Electoral Divisions: N/A

Executive Summary:

West Sussex County Council believes in strong, vibrant communities and this is why helping people to help themselves and each other is at the heart of everything it does.

Local Authorities have a duty as Corporate Parents to support those leaving care until they are 21 years of age (or up to 25 years if they are accessing Higher Education).

The Council, in supporting this outcome, offers programmes which serve to:

- Reduce homelessness,
- Plan to address the specific needs of care leavers,
- Help them to cope with living independently and;
- Support the meeting of the recommendations from the Ofsted Inspection completed in January 2016.

In order to meet both the stated outcomes, as noted above and the Ofsted recommendation it is necessary to re-procure supported accommodation for those young people who are leaving the care of the Local Authority and for those that are most vulnerable.

Recommendations

That the Cabinet Member agrees:

1. The re-procurement of the supported accommodation pathway for young people leaving the care of the Authority, unaccompanied asylum seekers and vulnerable young people where we have a duty to provide either short or long-term accommodation;
2. The inclusion and enablement of an improved range of accommodation options that works to ensure the discontinuation of bed and breakfast accommodation except where required in exceptional circumstances;

3. Via an open procurement process for contracts to commence from 1 April 2017, with the value of approximately £2m per annum and within current financial resources; and to
4. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Care, Wellbeing and Education to let the contract to be commissioned in accordance with this decision.

1. Background and Context

- 1.1 West Sussex County Council believes in strong, vibrant communities and this is why helping people to help themselves and each other is at the heart of everything it does. Wherever possible the County Council wants to move away from a dependency culture and encourage young people to strive to achieve their ambitions through:
 - Ensuring they are given the best start possible, so they are able to reach their full potential; they will be given the right support and a home environment that encourages them to lead safe, happy, healthy and productive lives
 - Having the knowledge and skills to successfully fill the jobs within a wide range of businesses and contribute to a vibrant and thriving local economy.
- 1.2 Local Authorities have a duty as Corporate Parents, to ensure the continued involvement and support of young people as they leave the care of the County Council and move into independent living. The Council has a duty to support those leaving care until they are 21 years of age (or up to 25 years if they are accessing Higher Education).
- 1.3 The County Council is committed to ensuring that care leavers and children in need receive targeted, high quality supported accommodation, with the aim that all young people leaving care are able to access safe and suitable accommodation that meets their individual needs. The Council in supporting this outcome offers programmes which serve to reduce homelessness, plan to address the specific needs of care leavers, and help them to cope with living independently.
- 1.4 Following the recent Ofsted Inspection of Children's services and subsequent report, published on 26 January 2016, the following recommendation was made with regards to the provision of support for those young people leaving the care of the Authority.

"Improve the range of accommodation options on offer for care leavers so that they can move from supported accommodation to independent living accommodation when they are ready. Discontinue the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for care leavers other than in exceptional emergency circumstances." Ofsted Jan 2016
- 1.5 In order to meet both our stated outcomes, as noted above and meet the Ofsted recommendation it will be necessary to re-procure supported accommodation for those young people who are leaving the care of the Local Authority and for those that are most vulnerable. The County

Council procures a variety of supported accommodation for young people either in and/or in the process of leaving care. All existing contracts held for supported accommodation will come to an end as of April 2017. The total value of these contracts is approximately £2m per annum. It is now necessary to put in place arrangements for the re-provision of these services from April 2017. A three year contract with option to extend for two years is proposed. The Council aims to further develop the accommodation and support it offers with a view to producing better outcomes for the young people it supports.

2. **Consultation**

- 2.1 In preparation for the re-procurement, a systemic review has been undertaken over the past six months inclusive of the issues faced by young people needing to access accommodation and move to fully independent living. The review was completed with the aim of determining whether or not any differing type of accommodation and/or support was required, as well as looking to minimise if not eradicate any use of inappropriate short-term accommodation such as Bed and Breakfast placements. This was a key recommendation emerging from the Ofsted inspection as noted above.

During the above review two substantial pilot initiatives were undertaken. One pilot providing 24/7 emergency accommodation, which allows full assessment of need to take place and then an appropriate placement to be found or action to be taken given the identified needs. The second pilot is a fully-managed supported scheme with accommodation for young people needing additional support to make a successful transition to independent living. Both pilots will run until April 2017. In addition a Joint Protocol with all district and borough housing departments has been agreed. The focus of the protocol is working together, supporting those who have left care to access local authority housing support. The pilots to date have decreased the need for the use of expensive and inappropriate accommodation such as Bed and Breakfast and also provided increased support and ability to access Local Authority housing options.

The County Council, in partnership with others, already offers a series of initiatives that includes:

- rent guarantee schemes,
- landlord and tenant mediation,
- work to repair, where appropriate relationships with family and friends, to increase the resource and resilience in the family to provide support to the young person in addition to the County Council and allowing the best possible chance to a young person's independent living arrangements succeeding first time.

2.2 **Members**

A Joint Scrutiny initiative with District and Borough Council members has been undertaken in the last two months. The purpose of which was as follows:

Aim and Outcome:

Review and consider the current housing provision for care leavers in West Sussex to help improve the co-working between District & Borough Councils and the County Council, with a view to the specific areas as stated below.

- To review the housing provision for young people leaving local authority care to ensure that accommodation needs and associated support in the community for young people leaving care are identified and procedures put in place to ensure that agencies work in partnership to achieve it. This part of the review should also include reviewing the Joint working protocol which has recently been created.
- To review the proposed changes to the allocation of Housing Benefit/Universal Credit to assess any potential impact on young people under the age of 21 years who are leaving the care of the Local Authority.

The work of the Joint Scrutiny Group has and will continue to inform the procurement process going forward.

2.3 **External**

There have been two substantial pilot initiatives as set out at paragraph 2.1

2.4 **Public**

Young people have been met with and consulted directly on the issues related to this matter and have shared their thoughts and experiences, see appendix A for interview feedback.

A Task and Finish Group, led by Horsham District council reviewed evidence gathered at the interviews and highlighted the main points to be drawn into the final report:-

1. A common and flexible policy across the County regarding "local connection"
2. Being aware that certain localities are not appropriate when allocating housing
3. Having a unified care leavers policy across all councils in the County
4. Basing care assessment on 'need' rather than age based, realising that some young people need support for much longer
5. Having one named officer at each council linked with this service
6. Maintaining this Task and Finish Group to monitor this process going forward
7. Ensuring that the Joint Working Protocol for Care Leavers is implemented
8. Looking to working with neighbouring authorities outside of West Sussex, i.e. Brighton and Hove

9. Help and intervention at a younger age
10. Having good quality and consistent help and support
11. Having the same support worker allocated to the young person, even if they are moved to a different area

2.5 **Internal**

A review group of internal stakeholders met over the last 18 months and conducted the review described at section 2.1 Consultation

Legal and procurement resources are currently being sourced alongside working with commissioning colleagues to ensure this procurement ties in with wider Family Operations agenda.

There are no Human Resources or TUPE requirements anticipated within this process.

3. **Proposal**

- 3.1 The re-provision of a new supported accommodation pathway will enable better outcomes for young people and ensure that the recommendations as detailed in the recent Ofsted inspection report are met.

It is the Council's aim to procure a range of supported accommodation for young people aged 16-21yrs within the above category groups which will include;

- 24/7 staffed emergency accommodation
- Intensively supported accommodation for those with high level needs
- Supported accommodation which will provide support and training to enable a successful move to fully independent living
- Quick access beds for those young people needing accommodation at short notice
- Provision for unaccompanied asylum seekers that fall under the duties of the Local Authority (UASC)

- 3.2 The outcomes that are sought through the procurement of the above are as follows:

- Provide a more cost efficient solution for the support of vulnerable young people which provide better outcomes
- Allows for a more flexible response in providing the right support for young people with complex and/or high level need
- Outcomes focused approach will give rise to the opportunity to develop the market by offering providers greater flexibility in how the provision is delivered yet with a clear focus on achieving the required outcomes
- Minimise number of accommodation moves for young people by enabling the right placement to be found first time which will support the young person into independent living

- Better distribution of accommodation options across the county which is currently only focused in one or two areas of the county
- Reduction/elimination of 'spot purchasing' (bed & breakfast) by 2017
- Will address the stated Ofsted recommendations

4. **Other Options considered**

4.1 There have been several pilots undertaken throughout the county which have provided the opportunity to establish and test the most cost effective model of delivery. This has clearly informed the new supported pathway and accommodation type required.

5. **Resource Implications and Value for Money**

5.1 As outlined above the proposal contributes to the County Council priority of giving children the best start in life. This proposal is the best option in terms of being delivered within existing resources and within budget allocations

6. **Impact of the proposal**

6.1 The County Council has ambitious aims to achieve better outcomes for those young people we have a duty to support and care for as their corporate parent. The County Council can provide no better start in life than supporting the young person into a safe and secure home where they can live independently and positively. The young person will be supported to play a positive and productive role within the community, whilst developing in confidence, skills and ability to live independently and be able to access support when and where needed.

The proposed re-provision of supported accommodation will ensure the County Council not only up hold its statutory duties but also ensure we provide the right service at the right time.

6.2 **Equality Duty.**

An equality impact report has been completed and is attached at Appendix B.

6.3 **Human Rights**

Article 8 of the Human Rights Act concerns the right of everyone to respect for their private life and home. The procurement strategy for supported accommodation will aim to provide accommodation for a potentially vulnerable section of society.

6.4 **Social Value**

One of the fundamental objectives of the Leaving Care Service (LCS) will be to support the young person leaving care to develop a strong sense of themselves and their identity. The development of positive self-image

and understanding of their background and history will enable the formation of a positive sense of citizenship. This will enable the young person to hold a sense of belonging and ownership of the community they live in and a connection to society in general. It will also work to develop confidence and self-esteem within the young person so they have the ability to make informed choices moving forward and be able to voice their opinions and thoughts on key issues that affect them.

7. **Risk Management Implications**

7.1 **Risk** (Legal, Reputational, and Financial)

- There is a significant risk associated with not procuring new contracts to support the accommodation needs of young people, as current accommodation contracts end their full term on 31st March 2017.
- There is a need to procure to fulfil statutory duties especially in line with unaccompanied asylum seeker duties.

Risk (Legal, Financial)

- There is a risk associated with delay in securing an early decision to allow the procurement to commence, this could impact on not having sufficient time to fully engage with the provider market and complete the procurement process and award contracts from 1st April 2017.
- There is a need for continuity of provision within current financial envelop with no risk of disruption to existing provision and the transition to new arrangements. Early market engagement with providers as this will assist in development of bids that will meet the identified needs in a specialist market and ensure we get best value for money

Risk (Legal, Reputational)

- There is a significant risk associated with not undertaking the procurement and continuing to use inappropriate accommodation (bed and breakfast). This would result in not meeting a key recommendation from the recent Ofsted Inspection (Jan 2016).

Mitigating action: The timeline has been drawn up with built in contingency to undertake an open procurement process starting May 2016 to enable contracts to be awarded ready to commence on 1st April 2017.

- 7.2 Over the past year, there has been a strong focus on assessing needs and reviewing issues and problems with a view of the type of provision required going forward, with the clear remit to provide better outcomes for our young people, address a key Ofsted recommendation whilst continuing to reduce overall costs. Using the information and intelligence gathered the service will work with the market to co-design and procure a more efficient and effective accommodation pathway that achieves better outcomes for our young people.

Avril Wilson
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Background Papers

None

Appendices

Appendix A – Interview responses from Care Leavers

Appendix B – Equality Impact Report

Equality Impact Report

Title of proposal	Procurement of county wide accommodation for young people leaving the care of the Local Authority and vulnerable young people.				
Date of implementation	May 2016				
EIR completed by:	<table border="0"> <tr> <td style="background-color: #e0f7fa;">Name:</td> <td>Carl Burton</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #e0f7fa;">Tel:</td> <td>033022 27137 Mobile 07595236785</td> </tr> </table>	Name:	Carl Burton	Tel:	033022 27137 Mobile 07595236785
Name:	Carl Burton				
Tel:	033022 27137 Mobile 07595236785				

1. Decide whether this report is needed and, if so, describe how you have assessed the impact of the proposal.

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Local Authorities have a duty as Corporate Parents to support those leaving care until they are 21 years of age (or up to 25 years if they are accessing Higher Education).

The Council, in supporting this outcome, offers programmes which serve to:

- Reduce homelessness,
- Plan to address the specific needs of care leavers,
- Help them to cope with living independently and;
- Support the meeting of the recommendations from the Ofsted Inspection completed in January 2016.
- Fulfil the duties of the Local Authority for unaccompanied Asylum Seekers

The County Council is committed to ensuring that care leavers and children in need receive targeted, high quality supported accommodation, with the aim that all young people leaving care are able to access safe and suitable accommodation that meets their individual needs.

The Council in supporting this outcome offers programmes which serve to reduce homelessness, plan to address the specific needs of care leavers, and help them to cope with living independently.

Following the recent Ofsted Inspection of Children’s services and subsequent report, published on 26 January 2016, the following recommendation was made with regards to the provision of support for those young people leaving the care of the Authority.

“Improve the range of accommodation options on offer for care leavers so that they can move from supported accommodation to independent living accommodation when they are ready. Discontinue the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for care leavers other than in exceptional emergency circumstances.” Ofsted Jan 2016

In order to meet both the stated outcomes, as noted above and the Ofsted recommendation it is necessary to re-procure supported accommodation for those young people who are leaving the care of the Local Authority, for those young people that are most vulnerable an unaccompanied Asylum Seekers.

2. Describe any negative impact for customers or residents.

There are no negative impacts for the customers as all aspects of gender, citizenship, sexuality, religion and/or ability will be considered and incorporated with the procurement process. This will ensure all adjustments that are appropriate will be taken with the set up and provision of accommodation which will be monitored through the contract management processes associated to the procurement process.

With regards to the residents of West Sussex the location of the accommodation will be

Careful judged to ensure that no detriment is brought to the community for having the accommodation within the proximity of the provision.

3. Describe any positive effects which may offset any negative impact.

The effect of the re-procurement will be to enable better outcomes and support to be offered to those we hold duties for. This will enable those supported in the accommodation to build a positive and productive life pathway that will ensure they achieve their ambitions and aspirations.

4. Describe whether and how the proposal helps to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

The contracts will have provision for the monitoring and evaluation of the required outcomes. This will include the provision for processes such as Restorative Justice. This is where a process of negotiation, discussion and understanding is utilised to resolve conflictual situations. This process aims to reduce the likelihood and eventuality of any form of discrimination, harassment and victimisation. It will also work to resolve and address any form of prejudice on the part of any associated party i.e. provider and customer.

5. Describe whether and how the proposal helps to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The procurement will serve to enable accessibility to all that we hold duty to including those with protected characteristics. In a way which meets their individual needs and circumstances, especially those from differing ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. One of the requirements of the procurement will be to enable those with differing characteristics to integrate into the local community and be aware of differing cultural and religious practices. This will support the prevention of minor and serious events from occurring and serve to reduce the potential of exploitation. It will also promote cultural and religious understanding between those who do and do not have protected characteristics.

6. Describe whether and how the proposal helps to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

In some occurrences those that share a protected characteristic and those that do not will be accommodated in the same provision. This is already occurring and the benefits are clear with respect to the integration and development of understanding of the differing cultural practices.

7. What changes were made to the proposal as a result? If none, explain why.

In preparation for the re-procurement, a systemic review has been undertaken over the past six months inclusive of the issues faced by young people needing to access accommodation and move to fully independent living. The review was completed with the aim of determining whether or not any differing type of accommodation and/or support was required, as well as looking to minimise if not eradicate any use of inappropriate short-term accommodation such as Bed and Breakfast placements. This was a key recommendation emerging from the Ofsted inspection as noted above.

8. Explain how the impact will be monitored to make sure it continues to meet the equality duty owed to customers and say who will be responsible for this.

The impact and equality duties will be monitored through the contract management process. Issues related to equalities will be specifically raised within all contract management meetings with the suppliers and feedback from the customers on equality related issues, will be sought as part of the contract monitoring and evaluation process.

To be signed by an Executive Director or Director to confirm that they have read and approved the content.

Name	Avril Wilson	Date	April 2016
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Your position	Executive Director Care Wellbeing and Education.
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