

18 December 2014		ITEM 6
Corporate Parenting Committee		
Housing for Looked After Children and Care Leavers		
Report of: Paul Coke, Service Manager, Through Care Services		
Wards and communities affected: None	Key Decision: Non-key	
Accountable Head of Service: Andrew Carter, Head of Care and Targeted Outcomes		
Accountable Director: Carmel Littleton, Director of Children's Services		
This report is Public		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides information in respect to housing provision for our looked after children and care leavers.

This report and its contents are written from an officer perspective.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS:

1.1.1 The Corporate Parenting Committee to monitor the impact of the Staying Put Policy on foster placements and finance.

1.1.2 The Corporate Parenting Committee to monitor the impact of Universal Credit on care leavers.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

2.1 The Corporate Parenting Committee has requested a report in respect to the provision of accommodation, supported or permanent, for our looked after children and care leavers.

2.1.1 This report will provide an update of the current situation.

2.1.2 The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 places a duty on the local authority to provide services to young people who are eligible for leaving care services, by way of a Pathway Plan. This will include accommodation.

- 2.1.3 The Children and Young Person's Act 2008 makes it a 'General duty of the local authority to secure sufficient accommodation for looked after children'.
- 2.1.4 Planning Transition to Adulthood for Looked After Children details more specifically the local authority's duties in respect to care leavers and accommodation.
- 2.1.5 Within the regulations bed and breakfast is considered not suitable accommodation.
- 2.1.6 Southwark Judgement – This is a piece of case law that requires children's services to provide accommodation and support to homeless 16-17 year olds.
- 2.1.7 There are a number of services available to our teenagers to prevent homelessness, such as the role of the Adolescent Team within Social Care that deals specifically with this age group in preventing homelessness.
- 2.1.8 Housing has provided a property, Charles Street, which has 5 units specifically for Social Care, with support provided via Family Mosaic. When young people present as homeless there is a joint assessment undertaken by Housing and Social Care. A further service that is provided to this age group is the Mediation Service that is also run by Family Mosaic.
- 2.1.9 There is a current Protocol between Housing and Social Care which enables Social Care to make referrals to Housing for care leavers for permanent accommodation. This referral will be accompanied with evidence of the young person's ability to live independently.
- 2.1.10 Each young person, if successful, will be placed on silver banding and able to bid for properties as per the current process.
- 2.1.11 Each young person is provided with a Setting Up Home Allowance of £2,000.00 as from April 2013.
- 2.1.10 Social Care are part of the Joint Resource Panel (JRP) with Housing, where all referrals for supported accommodation is discussed and allocated on a monthly basis
- 2.1.12 Social Care has access to the use of Family Mosaic who provide both supported accommodation and individual packages of support where appropriate to our young people.
- 2.1.13 Within the After Care Team we have a worker that deals primarily with housing issues for our care leavers and works in partnership with Housing colleagues both in house and in the private sector.
- 2.1.14 The Department's working relationship with Housing is very good and constant dialogue with staff enables this relationship to remain positive.

- 2.1.15 A meeting took place with Housing on the 23 November 2014, to clarify the roles and responsibilities of both Departments in respect to young people who become homeless, especially those who lose their accommodation and are deemed 'intentionally homeless'.
- 2.1.16 The meeting agreed that further work needed to be explored in respect to a joint response by Housing and Social Care in respect to intentional homelessness, with a Business Case to be written outlining the issues, responsibilities for Housing and Social Care and the financial impact of homelessness in respect to care leavers. A Business case will be completed by the 31 January 2015.
- 2.1.17 It was agreed that care leavers could be registered for social housing at 17.5, and that rent agreements could be signed for rent to be paid direct to the landlord.
- 2.1.18 The Department has to provide performance data to the Department for Education on care leavers living in suitable accommodation at ages 19, 20 and 21.
- 2.1.19 The Department, via its Resource Panel and Transition Panel, will agree for young people to remain with their foster carers post-18 if they are in education and completing a course, or there are specific circumstances that warrant this to happen.
- 2.1.20 The Department is currently completing a policy in respect to Staying Put that will detail the Department's role and responsibility for our young people when these requests are made. It will also provide our financial commitment to this process. It is anticipated that the policy will be ready by the 9 January 2015.
- 2.1.21 The Government has provided financial support for Staying Put which is limited and for this financial year only. This money will not cover all the requests the Department receives for Staying Put this financial year.
- 2.1.22 A new Pathway Plan has been developed and gone through the consultation process with the CiCC and staff. It is due to go to senior management team for ratification early in January 2015 and there are current discussions with our LCS (Liquid Logic Children's Service) team about transforming the new Pathway Plan onto our IT system. We hope to implement the new Pathway Plan by 19th January 2015.

3.0 PERFORMANCE:

- 3.1 The After Care Team currently has 107 young people open to the team, with 6 case workers, one of whom is currently on maternity leave, one who has sole responsibility for housing/accommodation issues and a team manager.
- 3.1.1 Our current data for each age group in terms of accommodation is as follows:

19 year olds

Total – 37

- 32 – Suitable accommodation
- 3 – Unsuitable accommodation
- 2 – Not recorded (cases were closed)

20 year olds

Total – 36

- 31 – Suitable accommodation
- 1 – Unsuitable accommodation
- 1 – Non - Engager
- 3 – Not recorded (cases were closed)

21 year olds

Total – 39

- 28 – Suitable accommodation
- 2– Non–engagers
- 1 - unspecified
- 8 - Not recorded (Cases Closed)

3.1.2 It has to be noted that there will be a proportion of young people where it is not recorded as for DFE purposes. This information needs to be recorded either 3 months prior to the young person’s birthday or 1 month after their birthday.

3.1.3 The reason for the recording of unsuitable accommodation is of those young people that are in prison.

3.1.4 Those cases that are closed (i.e. not recorded) are where the young people have returned home successfully to their families and their case was closed prior to it being transferred to the After Care Team.

3.1.5 The After Care Team currently work with young people in a number of different types of accommodation such as:

- 8 living with family members
- 10 After Care Team accommodation
- 5 Staying Put Arrangements
- 3 Living with friends
- 7 HMP
- 4 Hostels
- 2 Mother and baby units
- 5 Private rented

- 36 Social Housing
- 1 Supported accommodation
- 6 University accommodation

- 3.1.6 The After Care Team manages 9 properties with a total of 14 beds. This accommodation is used for young people who are in the transition to obtaining their own accommodation, those that have no recourse to public funds or those that we need to place in an emergency.
- 3.1.7 Since April 2014 there have been no evictions in respect to our care leavers. In 2013/14 there were 3 evictions.
- 3.1.8 The After Care Team works with Housing regarding potential evictions by sending an Arrears Panel Notification to the Housing Worker on a weekly basis. Any young people identified on the notification are then flagged up and arrangements made to attend the Arrears Panel to discuss the situation and make decisions regarding the arrears and how this is going to be managed.
- 3.1.9 In respect to those young people that have been accommodated under the Southwark Judgement Ruling since April 2014, there are 4.
- 3.1.10 Of the 4 young people 3 have since closed and are receiving services as children in need and 1 remains a looked after child, currently in foster placement.
- 3.1.11 The Department is continuing its discussions with other local authorities in conjunction with our Commissioning Team how best to commission supported accommodation for 16+ year olds.
- 3.1.12 The roll out of Universal Credit (UC) is imminent in that it becomes live for Thurrock residents in March 2015. This will affect single claimants only as the first part of this process and will be administered by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). At the time of this roll out it will affect 35 care leavers, who will be eligible to claim.
- 3.1.13 All payments will be made monthly as a lump sum and paid directly into a bank account. UC includes JSA, Housing Benefit, Income Support and Employment Support Allowance. Council Tax Support will continue to be administered by the local authority until further notice.
- 3.1.14 It has been agreed that care leavers can still have their rent paid by direct payments. Sanctions will be imposed on those who do not comply with DWP rules. The range of sanctions is yet to be decided.
- 3.1.15 There is a draft Joint Protocol between the DWP and Thurrock Council which addresses the support that will be provided to care leavers in Thurrock. This needs to be signed off by both parties by the end of December 2014 (see appendix 1)

3.1.16 A meeting will be held to ensure the Department has a corporate approach to our care leavers when this comes into force.

3.1.17 We continue to be represented at the Joint Referral Panel which addresses housing needs for all young people including our care leavers.

4 IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

4.1 The impact of the changes to welfare benefit and the implementation of universal credit mean that it will be the responsibility of the tenant to pay the housing costs to the housing provider. This could mean that payments are not made which could possibly lead to an increase in evictions.

4.1.1 The Local Authority will need to ensure it has processes and arrangements in place that enable young people, especially care leavers to manage this change and the payment of rent plus housing benefit direct to the provider so that evictions for non-payment of rent are kept at its minimum.

4.1.2 The Department will need to monitor the impact of the Staying Put policy, the financial implications and the impact on placements of foster carers who decide to continue to care for the young people under this arrangement.

5. IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Kay Goodacre**
Telephone and email: **Children's Services Finance Manager**

The financial implications are contained within the body of the report.

5.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Solicitor

Part 5 Welfare of Children (98) of the Children and Families Act 2014 came into force on the 13 May 2014 and places a new duty on Local Authorities. It requires local authorities in England to facilitate, monitor and support staying put arrangements for fostered young people until they reach the age of 21, where this is what they and their foster carers want, unless the Local Authority consider that the staying put arrangement is not consistent with the welfare of the young person. A Staying Put arrangement is not the same as a foster placement. The young person staying put, who must be a former relevant child, is no longer a looked after child. They are a young adult and a care leaver and they are entitled to support as a care leaver.

5.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Teresa Evans**
Equalities and cohesion Officer

No diversity and equality implications however outcomes will be monitored to ensure individual equality impacts are compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

5.4 **Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental**

No other implications

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Staying Put arrangements as a framework has been promoted by Government, who have also put aside some finance to enable local authorities to implement this arrangement.
- 6.2 The local authority will need to monitor the impact of this policy on the numbers of foster carers and placements this arrangement uses and the financial impact
- 6.3 As UC is due to be rolled out in March 2015, this also will need to be monitored in terms of its impact on those care leavers that will be recipients of the new benefit.

BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT:

APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:

Appendix 1 – Draft Joint Protocol between the DWP & Thurrock Council

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