

## **Children and Young People Select Committee**

**31 October 2018**

### **Accommodation and Support for Independence for Care Leavers**

**Report by Executive Director Children, Adults, Families, Health & Education and Director of Children and Family Services**

#### **Summary**

The County Council has statutory responsibilities to provide support for children, young people and young adults expected to cease or who have ceased to be looked after. This, in some cases will include the provision of accommodation and support to enable their move to independence. It may extend up to the age of 25. The responsibility includes those at risk of needing to become looked after. It also includes unaccompanied asylum seekers (UASC) who reach adulthood but do not acquire rights to other support.

These services are referred to as independent living or supported accommodation. The County Council relies on the private and voluntary sector to provide accommodation and support for these young people.

Within the Children' Commissioning Strategy for Complex needs 2018-2021, the Council has committed to the introduction of a range of alternative accommodation models which ensure the availability, affordability and quality of the accommodation and support required. This includes the introduction of individual units of training accommodation – that is accommodation with support specifically designed to enable young people to move to independent living.

This paper introduces the aims and principles behind the possible purchase and creation of the 'training accommodation' for this group of young people, with a view to working in partnership with the market to support the pathways to independence. If approved, it will progress to a full business case to be considered within the Council's capital programme governance.

#### **West Sussex Plan: Policy Impact and Context:**

This proposal will contribute to the key strand 'Best Start in Life', primarily:

- Children and Young People are Able to Thrive
- Children and Young People Feel Safe and Secure
- All Children and Young People are Ready for School and Work

Taking our young people, who are leaving a care setting, into a pathway that enables them to learn how to manage a tenancy, secure accommodation and increase their own resilience will ensure they have a better chance to thrive. This will give an opportunity for young people to make the transition into adulthood in a supported way and reduce the risks of homelessness and unemployment.

## **The focus for scrutiny**

- 1) To discuss and comment on the principles and aims of this proposal and
- 2) To identify areas of focus for the development of a full business case for Capital Programme governance and decision for the Cabinet Member

## **Proposal**

### **1. Background and Context**

- 1.1 The council has a statutory responsibility to provide a variety of services for children, young people and young adults. These obligations arise in relation to those leaving, who have left or are at risk of entering care. In some cases the duty can continue until the age of 25 when the young person is in receipt of training or education. This responsibility includes unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC).
- 1.2 In addition to the duty to ensure that the appropriate levels of support and care are in place to meet the individual needs of the young people we also have the responsibility to provide accommodation in circumstances defined in legislation. These services are referred to as 'independent living' or 'supported accommodation'.
- 1.3 Within the Children' Commissioning Strategy for Complex needs 2018-2021, particular focus has been placed on the introduction of a range of alternative delivery models to ensure the availability, affordability and quality of the accommodation and support required by a range of children and young people, in particular children looked after (CLA), care leavers, complex high risk adolescents and those on the edge of care.
- 1.4 The council currently relies significantly on purchasing both accommodation and support from the external market. This is a situation we expect to continue. Whilst the external market provides a quantity of supported accommodation units, no supplier currently provides individual units of 'training' accommodation – places which provide support directed at enabling the move to independent living in a timely, person-centred way.
- 1.5 The 'Leaving Care Service' currently has a caseload of 572 young people, aged between 16-25. Of this number, 142 are in some form of 'supported accommodation' and a further 32 are accommodated in private, registered residential accommodation. Others are in different support settings, such as foster care or independent accommodation, but they may need to move to supported accommodation/training accommodation in the future, with these numbers expected to stay at these levels.
- 1.6 The 142 customers in supported accommodation are in accommodation which is purchased by the Council. These units are mixed, some with onsite support 24/7 and others with outreach support. 69 of these spaces are purchased in 'blocks', across several different providers. The others are spot purchased, primarily due to lack of sufficiency within the market. These 142 spaces are currently costing WSCC in the region of £136k per week. The range of suppliers and distribution of placements is attached in appendix 1.

- 1.7 The accommodation we are purchasing from the market has stagnated, and the number of care leavers we are supporting is 'blocking' the move through. We currently cannot secure training, independent units from the market that act as the final stage support before full independence. This type of accommodation will have a genuine focus on preparing the young people to live fully independently and successfully in a more timely way.
- 1.8 Currently, the strategy for 16-25 Year olds is being re-written and has a real focus on pathways from high supported to independent accommodation and this proposal would play a key part in that pathway. The use of council owned property will provide greater value for money for the council and ensure sufficiency of supply. This will also allow for greater control over the accommodation, allowing it to flex to meet the changing demographics of the young people WSCC have a responsibility for.

## **2. Proposal**

- 2.1 To ensure that the County Council is receiving the best value for money and to continue to provide the appropriate accommodation and support for care leavers, it is proposed that the County Council acquires a range of properties in key strategic geographical areas where demand is prevalent.
- 2.2 The properties that are acquired will be reconfigured /refurbished into clusters of training units (these could be self-contained flats). The scheme would aim to create up to 20 training units and accommodate children between the ages of 16-25yrs currently in higher cost placements. These higher cost placements range from £500-£1000 per week. The average cost of providing a bed space, with support, within our own accommodations sits between £250-£350. We anticipate these training units would fall in the lower cost region given the nature of the support being final stage prior to full independence.
- 2.3 The support in the units would then be focused on supporting the resident to maintain independence, resilience and readiness for moving on. The support element of the placement would be provided by an external partner, working alongside our own teams. In this way, the training accommodation has a much greater emphasis on independence than current supported accommodation.
- 2.4 It is intended that the full design and business planning would be undertaken in conjunction with specific support providers, who hold expertise within the supported accommodation and pathway to independence fields. This may include the current providers we work with on our 16-25 accommodation DPS, or new providers within the area. The procurement approach would ensure working with providers to create an innovative partnership approach.

## **3. Resources**

- 3.1 Capital consequences & Revenue: The capital programme implications and future finance requirements will be considered fully as the proposal is developed and a full business case prepared.

- 3.2 The effect of the proposal: Full detail will be confirmed after consideration of the principles of the proposal and progression through capital programme governance. The overarching financial implication is to gain better flexibility within the market and save on revenue funding by providing more effective pathway support with a cost per bed spaces being reduced by up to 50%.
- 3.3 Future transformation, savings/efficiencies being delivered: The acquisition and refurbishment of property will be overseen by council resource located within legal services, finance, capital governance and market development teams. Property management of the training units and the ongoing support to residents would be provided by an external partner. The detail of how property maintenance and other property related costs would be allocated will be worked through as part of the business case.

Value for money is demonstrated through:

- The emphasis on best value provision for care leavers will require an outcomes based approach with a clear focus on ensuring care leavers receive support for independence and resilience in a timely way.
  - The training unit model will ensure care leavers are able to enter in to the traditional housing market in a more timely manner and sustain their own tenancy without further ongoing support.
  - The introduction of an alternative accommodation model within the market will stimulate competition and more competitive pricing within existing suppliers.
  - The scheme anticipates contributing directly to the savings identified within the MTFS
- 3.4 Human Resources, IT and Assets Impact: There is little or no impact on HR or IT services
- 3.5 The Assets Team will be required to input into the full business case and coordinate this proposal through the Capital Programme initially. Once approved, authority to implement schemes will be delegated to the most appropriate arrangement suited to the project's delivery.

## **Factors taken into account**

### **4. Issues for consideration by the Select Committee**

- 4.1 To discuss and comment on the principles and aims of this proposal and to identify areas of focus for the development of a full business case for Capital Programme governance and decision for the Cabinet Member.

### **5. Consultation**

- 5.1 Consultation with service users, the market and wider internal and external stakeholders will be ongoing throughout the mobilisation of the scheme. Representatives from the Children in Care Council are part of ongoing discussions regarding the value and use of training units. They will continue to participate as the scheme is designed and mobilised. The council continues

to engage in dialogue with the market to ensure that the appropriate type of accommodation and support is available.

- 5.2 Members: The Select Committee is being invited to comment on the proposals at an early stage.
- 5.3 Internal: Officers from Procurement, Legal, Finance, Estates and Commissioning are part of a core team established to design, develop and mobilise the scheme.

## **6. Risk Management Implications**

- 6.1 Children aged 16-24 are currently placed in a variety of supported accommodation placements, some with levels of support that are not required. This presents the risk that they are ill prepared for adulthood and independence. The use of training fats will specifically mitigate this risk creating an alternative accommodation model with a clear focus on developing the required life skills and resilience.
- 6.2 The cost of supported accommodation is directly proportionate to the amount of support offered. As a significant purchaser of these services we are vulnerable to wider market forces impacting on the price presented to us. The training unit scheme aims to provide only the required support. This will minimise the inappropriate use of high cost supported accommodation units and reduce our vulnerability to wider PESTEL factors.
- 6.3 The scheme will only be successful if the right children are placed in the training units and receive the right amount of support for the right time. To ensure this takes place the newly created Market Development Team will work closely with the care leaver's service and the support provider to ensure children are progressed in a timely manner.
- 6.4 The full business case, taken through Capital Governance Board prior to final decision paper would include the following operational considerations:

**Tenure** - If WSCC were to own the properties we may need to lease them to a third party who in turn would let to the individuals on non-secure tenancies or Assured Shorthold Tenancies. – This could be done through an RSL and this arrangement would need to be procured.

**Management** - The support and management will also need to be procured –this could be through the same provider.

**Acquisition Costs** -The business case will account for the cost of acquiring the properties in addition to any refurbishment costs. Acquisition costs would include the purchase price, Stamp Duty, possibly agent's fees, legal fees etc. We may need to procure an agent to acquire the properties for us. Any works required to alter the property and fit out, furnish will also need to be costed and procured through the Capital Development Team.

**Revenue Funding** - A full revenue (income and expenditure) forecast for the next 15 – 20 years would be needed

**Market Appraisal** – Once the service have identified where we want the properties, location, size, standard and specification a market assessment of the availability of property would need to be part of the feasibility as would the resource implications of an acquisition programme of this nature

**Asset Strategy** - The capital funding would come from the Asset Strategy Capital Programme allocation – this funding would be competing with business cases from all the other services so a very clear overarching strategy for this service that fitted with the Asset Strategy would be needed.

## **7. Other Options Considered**

- 7.1 As the full business case is developed the proposal will be tested against other options including the development of such training units by the existing market of suppliers or different models for the Council's direct or arm's length interest in the properties.

## **8. Equality Duty**

- 8.1 The children accessing this scheme will have a range of individual needs. In order to promote their independence and resilience the support offered will have regard to their gender, age, disability, race, religion, cultural identity and sexual orientation. As the project is further developed the Council's public sector equality duty in relation to those with protected characteristics will be incorporated into the assessment of the proposal's delivery.

## **9. Social Value**

- 9.1 Embedded within any support contract will be the requirement to consider value in all aspects of the support offered. Providers will be expected to provide evidence that they have considered and implemented actions flowing from the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012. This may include but will not be limited to:
- Supporting the local economy
  - Providing training and employment opportunities, including supporting local schools and colleges with work placements or traineeships, internships and apprenticeship schemes
  - Supporting and working with the local community
  - Reducing environmental impact

This requirement will be subject to monitoring as part of the contract

## **10. Crime and Disorder Implications**

- 10.1 Not required.

## **11. Human Rights Implications**

- 11.1 Not required.

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**Appendix A:** List of providers and placement numbers**Background Papers:**

- [Commissioning Strategy for children and young people with complex needs 2017 \(2018-2021\)](#)
- [Children and Young Peoples Sufficiency Strategy \(2018-2021\)](#)