

Meeting: Corporate Parenting Panel
Date: 13 October 2014
Subject: Meeting the Housing and Support Needs of Vulnerable Young People

Report of: Julie Ogley, Director of Social Care, Health and Housing

Summary: This report provides an additional perspective to the report to the Panel at its meeting of 21 July 14 and to the previous presentation to the CPP on 3 February 14. The report's key message is closer operational collaboration between Housing and Children's Services in the context of a change agenda set by Executive in May 14 and detailed in this report. That change agenda is aligned to and consistent with the council's role as a Corporate Parent. Meeting the housing and support needs of vulnerable young people is the responsibility of the whole Council.

Advising Officer: Julie Ogley, Director of Social Care, Health and Housing
Contact Officer: Tony Keaveney – Assistant Director, Housing
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The Report supports the following Council priorities to:

- Promote health and wellbeing and protecting the vulnerable.
- Improve educational attainment.

Financial:

1. Financial costs relating to accommodation for Looked After Children (LAC) up to the age of 18 is funded entirely from the Children's social care budget. For care leavers from the age of 18 the housing costs i.e. rent/council tax are typically met through housing benefit or personal income (where a person is employed). Housing support services, that are non-statutory, are funded from the General Fund and for council tenants by the Housing Revenue Account.

Legal:

2. The Council has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children it looks after regardless of where they live. When a Looked After Child reaches 18 years old they become care leavers. In accordance with the duties outlined in the Leaving Care Act 2000, care leavers are entitled to access local authority housing support.

3. Care Leavers are entitled to apply for a council or Housing Association home via the Housing Register. Care Leavers are explicitly identified in the Central Bedfordshire Allocations Policy as having a need for housing assistance.
4. The Council is expected to accommodate any homeless young person [aged 16-18 year olds] under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 where it is assessed that they are a child in need whenever it is determined that the young person has nowhere else to reside and there is no appropriate adult to care for them.
5. The Children and Family Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 introduce new duties around assessing and planning for care and support needs.

Risk Management:

6. The Council ensures that all young people looked after [16 years -18 years] are accommodated in safe & suitable accommodation.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

7. Not Applicable

Equalities/Human Rights:

8. All looked after children and care leavers will be offered safe & suitable accommodation appropriate to their needs. Assessments to determine accommodation needs take into account the young person's independence skills, their ethnicity and disability.

Public Health

9. Good housing has a positive impact on the physical health and emotional well being of young people.

Community Safety:

10. Good housing with appropriate support helps to prevent vulnerable Young People from becoming either victims or perpetrators of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Sustainability:

11. Not Applicable.

Procurement:

12. Not applicable.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to:

- 1 **Consider the issues within this report and steps identified to improve outcomes for Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers from a Housing perspective, noting that the primary aim of this report is twofold –**

1.1 To explain how closer operational collaboration between Housing and Children's colleagues will improve our approach to housing and supporting Care Leavers/LAC; and

1.2 To create wider understanding of the need to provide for-:

i) Access to accommodation (supported housing and permanent settled accommodation) including needs assessment, advice and problem resolution;

ii) Access to appropriate support services to enable young people to secure and then maintain their accommodation. For example, Bromford Support, in which the council invests £450 k per annum;

iii) Tenancy Sustainment, to manage risk and avoid tenancy failure or crisis.

2 Note the wider context in which the Housing Service operates to provide services to a broader cohort of Young People requiring housing assistance.

3 Note the commitment of colleagues in the Social Care, Health and Housing (SCH&H) Directorate to the establishment of a Corporate Parenting Operations Group (CPOG), its proposed Terms of Reference and the proposed Improvement Plan.

4 Note the importance of additional provision of accommodation based supported housing services for young people, that can be achieved through the affordable housing programme and the Housing Service Investment Plan, where the aims are specifically –

4.1 To create new supply so as to improve access to mainstream accommodation with support.

4.2 To create new supply so as to improve access to supported accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds and 18+ Care Leavers.

Introduction and Background

13. This report provides an additional perspective to the report to the Panel at its meeting of 21 July 14 titled – Access to Suitable Accommodation for Care Leavers, following on from a presentation to the CPP on 3 February 14.

14. This report outlines the strategic drivers that are acting to bring Children's Services and Social Care, Health and Housing into closer collaboration, and discusses the emerging strategic and operational response from a Housing perspective. The report sets these activities in context by outlining the barriers that vulnerable young people face in their access to housing.

15. The Care Act 2014 and the Children and Families Act 2014 are both strategic drivers with implications for the council's response to young people. The Children and Families Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities for joint commissioning

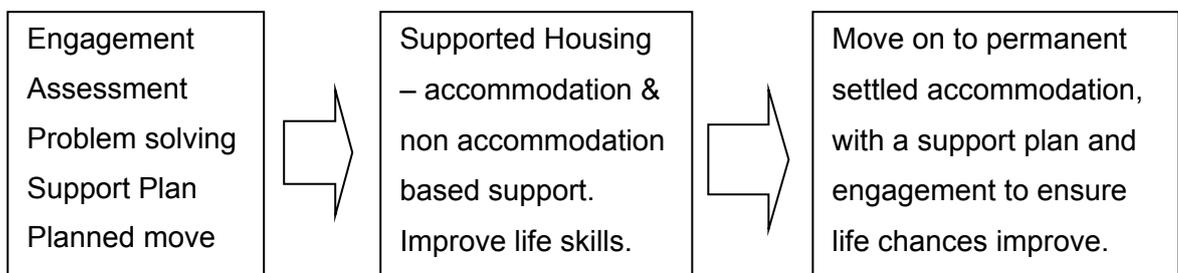
and assessment of Education, Health and Care needs, to support Young People that have Special Educational Needs or disabilities, from birth to the age of 25.

16. The Care Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities to plan for the availability of care and support services that are preventative, and that promote wellbeing and independence. The Act identifies access to suitable accommodation and support as an inherent part of wellbeing. This duty applies to the entire population, not just those entitled to statutory social care support.
17. The Care Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities to carry out an assessment of care and support needs, as part of transition planning, for any Young Person likely to have care and support needs when they reach 18 years of age.
18. The 21 July report proposed the creation of a Care Leavers Accommodation Working Group, recognising that Housing and Corporate Parenting colleagues need to collaborate more effectively on the operational response to Care Leavers with housing needs; and on the strategic response to vulnerable Young People. This group had its first meeting on 10 September, since when it has been known as the Corporate Parenting Operations Group (CPOG).
19. The Head of Corporate Parenting has the full support of the Housing Service and Adult Social Care Commissioning colleagues in establishing this group and achieving its aims. The aims of this group are aligned to and consistent with a strategic housing agenda, to make best use of a scarce resource (social housing tenancies) by improving access to mainstream council and Housing Association homes for vulnerable people. The Tenancy Strategy (adopted in 2013) and the newly adopted Allocations Policy are the main tools for achieving this, the later Policy representing a clear commitment to facilitate access to suitable housing for LAC.
20. The Allocations Policy can be found at www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/home-and-housing/housing/default.aspx. An Executive Report of May 2014, outlining the broader housing change agenda, can be found at Appendix One.
21. The aims of the CPOG are also aligned to a project called Meeting the Housing Needs of Vulnerable People. This project has sought to understand, and propose a response, to unmet needs for both supported accommodation, and mainstream accommodation with floating support. There has been close collaboration with LAC colleagues on this project. The 13+ Transition and Asylum Team Manager has provided information about numbers of Young People in need of these services, and the type and intensity of support required.
22. Case study information has been provided that illustrates both the immediate operation challenges posed by Young People with complex difficulties, and has informed the proposed strategic response. Several of these cases have been discussed at the first CPOG meeting.
23. The next section of this report explores barriers to housing experienced by vulnerable Young People, and the day to day housing response to them. The report then goes on to discuss the developing strategic response in more detail, making clear the aspiration to provide additional accommodation based supported housing, whilst acknowledging that there is a financial constraint.

Housing barriers facing Care Leavers

24. Care Leavers generally 'leave home' at a younger age than the general population. (Barnardo's, 2014). In doing so, they are taking a step that people typically undertake with the support of their family, after they are established in employment. It is very common to go back if things don't work out. For Care Leavers the stakes are higher. They risk homelessness if things don't work out.
25. There are significant financial barriers to accessing the Private Rented Sector (PRS). Rents for self-contained accommodation tend to be out of reach of people on low-incomes unless claiming benefits. The entitlement for Care Leavers to claim Local Housing Allowance for self-contained accommodation ends at the age of twenty-two, at which point the young person may be obliged to move to a shared house.
26. Renting a room in a shared house is more affordable and can be a positive choice for some. However, it can be a challenging situation for a vulnerable young person, and is not often viewed as a step-up by those that have been in residential care.
27. Renting a Council or Housing Association home can help overcome some of these barriers. Rents are lower than the PRS and the age restriction on Local Housing Allowance does not apply. Under the Housing Act 1996, Care Leavers are owed a full homeless duty by the council (unless intentionally homeless), to be found accommodation. Our approach, is always to prevent homelessness wherever possible. To this end, we work with Corporate Parenting colleagues to assist in planning for transitions, so that a young person needing social housing can have a planned move. Applications are usually made when the young person is 17.
28. Social housing is a scarce resource in great demand. In order to make the best use of this scarce resource, the council's Allocations Policy limits access to the Housing Register only to those in social need of a home. The Allocations Policy explicitly identifies Care Leavers as having a social need.
29. Alongside the challenges outlined above, some Care Leavers have significant personal challenges that hinder their ability to cope. For instance, psychological impact of negative life-experiences, vulnerability to peer pressure (particularly if those peers are their main form of 'support'); offending behaviour, and there may be Learning Disabilities and Mental Health needs. Housing colleagues recognise and acknowledge the challenge that Corporate Parenting colleagues have in seeking good outcomes for Young People in these circumstances.
30. Paragraphs twenty and twenty-one of the 21 July report refer to the process by which the Care Leavers are supported to acquire the life skills that they will need in order to live independently, and assisted to obtain a property only after the Leaving Care Team consider them to be ready.

31. Social housing providers would still wish a Care Leaver in this situation to have a support package in place, before they take up an independent tenancy. In practice, even those with good life skills will still be facing a challenge that most people would need some support with. The right support package can be crucial in giving the young person a better chance of establishing their tenancy successfully.
32. In order to supplement the support provided by the Personal Advisor to a Care Leaver in a new tenancy, floating support can be arranged to assist with such things as home-making; budgeting; meeting the requirements of their tenancy agreement (paying rent and being a good neighbour); controlling access to their home and the behaviour of their visitors and helping to counter vulnerability to peer pressure and/or exploitation.
33. There are two council funded services that provide this kind of floating support, the council-run Tenancy Liaison Service (funded by the Housing Revenue Account for council tenants) and Bromford Support. In addition, the HRA invests £100k pa in Childrens Services, to contribute to the provision of support. One area that will be examined more closely is whether operational pathways are acting to bring Young People into contact with these services early enough.
34. There are three independent providers of supported accommodation in Central Bedfordshire, funded by the Council. The total investment by the SCH&H Directorate is 665 k pa. These services provide accommodation with on-site support to vulnerable Young People who are not ready for their own tenancy.
35. However, it is clear that this accommodation does not cater for all vulnerable homeless Young People in Central Bedfordshire. Services are over-subscribed and some young people needing a highly supported environment (including young people both above and below Adult Social Care eligibility criteria thresholds) are not catered for by any of the local supported accommodation services.
36. In producing this report, there has been a review of recent case studies. They illustrate the difficulty of arranging appropriate housing and support for young people with complex and challenging behaviour. The solutions in these challenging scenarios require creativity to solve problems and require the whole system to be working well, in terms of –



37. The role of the Corporate Parenting Operations Group is seen as vital in addressing some of these barriers locally, and this is discussed in more detail. There is consensus that the 'next step' should be a focussed Improvement Plan,

based on learning from the review of challenging and complex casework, including those scenarios where the behaviour of a young person is particularly difficult.

38. The review of cases has proved illuminating as to where blockages lie in the system. The issues/blockages can be summarised as –
- Advice/intervention is often sought at a point of crisis – e.g. breakdown of a supported housing arrangements, or failure of planned arrangement.
 - Shared understanding, communication and over reliance on known officers
 - Established protocol is not well known or understood – regular refresh is necessary and will be included within the induction plan for new/interim staff
 - All Housing Service staff need to refresh on Child protection training.

The material point is that the system blockages and issues relate to the system as a whole, not necessarily to any one part of the system. In the main, the issues are typically related to challenging behaviours and problems that require resolution. Typically the Care Leaver requires ongoing support.

The typical context is that the intervention is at a point of crisis – where ideally, the approach should be to achieve outcomes that are planned, within a relatively stable environment. That isn't always possible, but as far as can be achieved, the approach will be to make accommodation available (using the Quota system within the Annual Lettings Plan) to support casework in a planned way.

39. It should be noted that the Housing colleagues are engaged with a wider cohort of vulnerable Young People for whom there are no Corporate Parenting responsibilities. These include young people who are homeless due to estrangement from their parents without being a Relevant Child or Care Leaver; Teenage Parents; and young people with disabilities that are entitled to Adult Social Care Support.

Developing the strategic response to Care Leavers and vulnerable Young People

The Council has adopted a Tenancy Strategy and Allocations Policy that will help in supporting vulnerable young people

Tenancy Strategy

40. The council's Tenancy Strategy is available to view online at <http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/home-and-housing/housing/housing-policies-strategies/housing-policies-strategies.aspx> This Strategy/associated process ensures that social housing is available to those in housing need.
41. The Tenancy Strategy requires that all new council tenants receive an Introductory Tenancy that lasts for 12 months. During this time, housing managers have access to a streamlined process for ending a tenancy that is not being conducted in an acceptable manner (via a legal process). In effect this is a tool for housing managers to manage behaviour issues effectively. Where necessary, the introductory period can be extended beyond 12 months.

42. At the end of an Introductory Tenancy, new tenants move onto a secure fixed-term 5 year tenancy. During this time, the Housing Service works closely with tenants, the aim being to develop life skills, encourage employment and enable tenants to benefit from the provision of social housing to improve their life chances. The Offer is known as the Housing Hand up. A tenant's circumstances are reviewed at four years, and as a result the tenant remain in their existing home, be assisted to move to alternative social accommodation if needs have changed, or to another tenure (for instance Low Cost Home Ownership) if the household is no longer in need of social housing.

Allocations Policy

43. The council's new Housing Allocations Policy, governing access to circa 1,000 lettings per annum of council and Housing Association homes, was adopted by Executive in May, to go live during October 2014. The intent of the policy is to align the scarce social housing resource to support the council's role as a Corporate Parent by facilitating access to stable housing in order to support their transition to independence; and to promote fostering and adoption by facilitating access to suitable accommodation. This is detailed on page 15 of the Policy.
44. Pages 26-30 of the policy identify who has priority for housing. Care Leavers and foster/adopting families are explicitly identified as having priority on pages 29-30. They are eligible to join the register and wait in date order for suitable properties.
45. An additional route into social housing will be via the quota system. Corporate Parenting will have a quota of 6 one-bed and 14 two/three bed properties per year to which they can nominate clients, be they single Care Leavers, Teenage Parents or foster/adopting families. These clients will be able to bid for properties from Band One, meaning that they will have priority over most other applicants and can reliably expect to find a suitable property within a predictable time frame.
46. The aim of the quota system is to provide Corporate Parenting colleagues with a Case Management tool, to enable planned moves. It also represents a cultural shift, giving Corporate Parenting colleagues access to a number of fast-track lettings on their own terms.
47. In order to manage access to a scarce resource, the Allocations Policy does not allow people to apply to the Housing Register where they have been at fault in the conduct of a previous tenancy. Where this applies to Care Leavers, including quota nominees, the Housing Service will hold a panel meeting to consider the Young person's application, with representation from Corporate Parenting. Where access to the Register is prohibited, there will be an agreed timetable for reconsideration, and an interim plan to address behavioural barriers to rehousing.

Young People and Adults with Disability Transitions Project

48. For young people with disabilities, the council is developing a smoother transition pathway. The Children and Families Act 2014 sets out a number of requirements and principles that Local Authorities **must have** regard to. In response the council has established a Support and Aspiration project, which has a number of

work streams. One work stream, chaired by the AD Adult Social Care, is the Young People and Adults with Disability Transitions Project. The project board includes representation from Housing and Children's services colleagues.

49. The project will develop a multi-agency transitions pathway and strategy to support all children and young people (14-25) with special educational needs and disabilities living in Central Bedfordshire to move into adulthood and achieve their full potential. Outcomes from this project will directly influence the collaboration approach between Housing colleagues, Children's Services colleagues and partners.

Council aspirations to further develop services for vulnerable Young People

50. There is also the need to improve access to mainstream homes with support, and to supported accommodation, for a wider cohort of vulnerable Young People that includes Care Leavers, single homeless Young People and Teenage Parents.
51. Work has been underway during 2013 and 2014 to produce a Market Position Statement to Meet the Housing Needs of Vulnerable People (MHNVP). Research conducted to inform this work found evidence of unmet housing/support needs in all of these groups. Further, the Homelessness Review finds that Vulnerable Young People are one of three groups locally that are most at risk or disproportionately affected by homelessness.
52. A Shared Homes accommodation pilot is currently being explored. The intention is to lease a council property to a specialist provider. Three vulnerable people with a pre-existing friendship, able to provide mutual support and a preference to share would live in the property, receiving intensive support from the provider. This model has the potential to work well for the right group of people.
53. Key-ring schemes work by tapping into the potential for people to offer each other mutual support. A small group of people with pre-existing friendships are enabled to move into independent accommodation in the same neighbourhood at the same time and provided with floating support. A pilot scheme is being considered, the next step being to identify the right group of Young People.
54. Evidence points to a need for new supported accommodation for 18+ Young People, in a way that complements provision of 16+ supported accommodation placements that Children's Services have tendered for. It is proposed that around 20 units of accommodation based support for vulnerable Young People aged 18+ should be available at locations across Central Beds. Information provided by LAC team suggests a particular need for provision that can offer a highly supported service to young people with complex and specialist challenges. Included within this would be a small number of highly supported units for Teenage Parents.
55. Housing colleagues can assist in the provision of properties where services could be delivered. The significant constraint is the resource required to fund on-site support. Even so, the approach will likely be an 'invest to save' to avoid cost elsewhere in the system. The potential for efficiency should be explored through joint review/commissioning across the Council.

56. The Council's Housing Strategy function (Regeneration Directorate) is responsible for the strategic review/assessment of housing need within the area, on which basis new build affordable housing supply is negotiated through s106 planning agreements. Consideration should be given to the need for affordable housing to meet the needs of young people. The opportunity to deliver new build specialist accommodation – aligned to the review of commissioned support services – provides all stakeholders with an opportunity to create a resource efficient model of accommodation based support for Young People, Care Leavers and LAC.
57. Officers will keep under review the data available about housing needs and types of support required to effectively commission suitable accommodation.

Next steps

58. The most important next step is to continue improving day to day experience of young people, understand blockages within the system and potential solutions to 'challenging scenarios'. The focus of this work will be an Improvement Plan, jointly led/owned by Housing and Children's colleagues.
59. There are challenging questions to address with regard to increased provision of accommodation based supported housing, that will require a joined up approach across the Council, working closely with partners/stakeholders..
60. An update report will be provided, if required, to the Corporate Parenting Panel in October 2015. That report will relate to the Improvement Plan that is being developed by the Corporate Parenting Operations Group, which shall include appropriate measures to evaluate the extent of progress made during the next year.

Appendices:

Appendix A - Executive report May 2014 Central Bedfordshire Housing Allocations Policy.

Background Papers:

None