

7 March 2013		ITEM 7
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: Barbara Foster, Head of Care and Targeted Outcomes		
Accountable Director: Jo Olsson, Corporate Director, People Services		
This report is Public		
Purpose of Report: To provide the Corporate Parenting Committee with information in respect to Housing provided for our looked after children and care leavers		

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 prospective.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1.1 Members to consider hearing more information about meeting to be arranged with Housing Benefit to discuss implications of the welfare reform changes for care leavers**
- 1.2 Members are asked to support that discussions take place internally (i.e. Children's Services) as to the prospect of raising the level of Setting up home Allowance**

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.

- 2.2 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, which will include accommodation.
- 2.3 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*'
- 2.4 National guidance entitled Planning Transition to Adulthood for Looked After Children, details more specifically the local authority's duties in respect to care leavers and accommodation
- 2.5 Within the regulations bed and breakfast arrangements are considered unsuitable accommodation
- 2.6 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.
- 2.7 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.
- 2.8 Each young person, if successful, will be placed on silver banding and able to bid for properties as per the current process.
- 2.9 Each young person is provided with a Setting up Home Allowance of £1,200.00.
- 2.10 Social Care are part of the Joint Resource Panel (JRP) with Housing, where all referrals for supported accommodation are discussed and allocated on a monthly basis
- 2.11 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.
- 2.12 Within the After Care Team we have a worker who deals primarily with housing issues for our care leavers and works in partnership with Housing colleagues both in-house and in the private sector.
- 2.13 The Department's working relationship with Housing is very good and constant dialogue with staff enables this relationship to remain positive.
- 2.14 The Department has to provide performance data to the Department for Education on care leavers living in suitable accommodation at the age of 19
- 2.15 The Department, as from April 2013, will need to provide performance data to the DFE for not only 19 year olds but also for those aged 20 and 21.
- 2.16 The Department, via its Resource Panel, will agree for young people to remain with their foster carers post-18 if they are in education and are completing a course or there are specific circumstances that warrant this to happen.
- 2.17 It is expected that a robust Pathway Plan is devised with appropriate timescales for move on.

3.0 PERFORMANCE:

3.1 Our current performance is as follows in respect to the data required for the DFE, out of 30 young people:

- 21 young people in suitable accommodation
- 2 young people in unsuitable accommodation
- 1 young person is in custody
- 6 young people not recorded:
 - 3 are still 18
 - 3 are children with a disability

3.2 The Aftercare Team are currently working with 100 care leavers. They are placed in the following types of accommodation:

- 14 placed in properties run by the After Care Team
- 22 in Social Housing
- 13 in Supported Lodgings
- 11 in Private rented accommodation
- 11 living with family
- 9 unknown
- 8 living with friends
- 2 in mental health institutes
- 4 evicted
- 1 in custody
- 1 in residential unit for disabled adults
- 3 in hostels
- 1 missing

Of those evicted, two have subsequently secured their own accommodation through social housing, one is staying with a friend, and another one is staying with a succession of friends on a temporary basis and refusing to engage with us.

3.3 The Aftercare Team manage 12 properties within the private sector

3.4 For those young people who fall into the category of the Southwark Judgement the Department has the allocation of 10 beds at Charles Street Hostel.

For the calendar year of 2012, there were 26 young people who presented as eligible under the Southwark Judgement Ruling:

- 5 young people became looked after
- 9 young people were placed at Charles Street Hostel
- 2 young people were placed at Brooke House
- 10 young people returned home or were found alternative accommodation

- 3.5 The Department is currently in discussions with other local authorities within the Eastern Region about accommodation for young people 16+ and the type of accommodation required.
- 3.6 These discussions are in their infancy, as there has only been one meeting to date.
- 3.7 The implementation of the Welfare Reform legislation may have an impact on care leavers in respect of universal credit and the payment of housing benefit.
- 3.8 There is a report attached detailing the likely impact on foster carers and 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.

5. IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

Implications verified by: Michael Jones
Telephone and email: **01375 652272**
mxjones@thurrock.gov.uk

Due to the changes in welfare benefits and the implementation of universal credit, this may have an impact on care leavers in terms of payment for housing costs being paid directly to them as opposed to directly to the local authority or housing provider.

5.2 Legal

Implications verified by: Lindsey Marks
Telephone and email: 01375 652054
lindsey.marks@BDTLegal.org.uk

Under the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 a Local Authority has a duty to secure sufficient accommodation for looked after children. The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 requires a Local Authority to provide a Pathway Plan to young people who are eligible for leaving care services and those services would include accommodation.

5.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Samson DeAlyn**
Telephone and email: **01375 652472**
sdealyn@thurrock.gov.uk

There are no immediate diversity and equality implications. The care leavers are a diverse group in themselves and there is no evidence of any service issues which impact more on one sub-group than another except for those young people who are asylum seekers, whose plans are governed by national legislation. However we do need to be mindful that any wider changes to the availability of housing will have a disproportionate impact on young adults who do not have the consistent practical support of birth families, which includes many of our Care Leavers.

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

No other implications

6. CONCLUSION

This report has given an overview of the whole range of issues which affect young people in terms of their housing. Members are respectfully asked to consider the recommendation which begin this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT:

- Department's Data Performance Information

APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:

- Protocol for Housing
- Welfare Reform Act 2012 and its implications for CATO

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