

Report for:
ACTION/INFORMATION

Item Number:

11

Contains Confidential or Exempt Information	NO
Title	Accommodation for young people leaving care
Responsible Officer(s)	Judith Finlay
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Portfolio(s)	Cllr Binda Rai - Children and Young People
For Consideration By	Corporate Parent Committee
Date to be Considered	4 th December 2014
Implementation Date if Not Called In	
Affected Wards	All
Keywords/Index	Leaving Care Act, Accommodation, Housing, Care Leavers

Purpose of Report:

To update the Committee on the accommodation needs of care leavers and consult on how best to meet these moving forward.

1. Recommendations:

- i) That Members note the accommodation needs of care leavers
- ii) That Members as corporate parents note the range of accommodation options available currently and proposed changes to the allocations policy
- iii) That Members note the range of support currently available to care leavers to prepare and transition to independent living
- iii) That Members and the Horizons Shoutout Care Council (HSCC) consider the issues raised and respond to the current consultation taking place led by the Housing service that will continue until early February in terms of influencing future allocations policy.

2. Reason for Decision and Options Considered

2.1 The authority has a statutory duty to respond to care leavers accommodation needs and ensure that they transition from care to suitable independent accommodation.

2.2 Due to reductions and pressures in local supply, the range of suitable options is in the process of change and it is therefore appropriate for this Committee and the HSCC to be involved in the consultation process.

3. Key Implications

3.1 Suitable and stable accommodation on leaving care is a key feature to enable young people to become successful independent adults and develop other areas of

their lives eg social networking, education, employment, training and relationships, as well as good mental and physical health outcomes.

3.2 Consultation with looked after children and care leavers frequently reflects their anxiety at moving on from foster care, residential care and semi-independent accommodation and coping successfully with the challenges of independent living. This transition usually happens between the ages of 18-21 which is much younger than the age at which the general youth population begin to leave home. Unlike this wider group care leavers also lack the ongoing support that families can provide should things go wrong. Therefore moving on to independent living is a critical period in a young persons life and it is important that they have the right support to make a successful transition.

3.3 Approximately 60 young people leave care each year and are placed in suitable options when it is felt they are ready to live in independent accommodation. A range of housing options are used including quota housing in council stock, nominations to housing associations and for some young people the privately rented sector. Bed and Breakfast accommodation is not considered by Ofsted to be a suitable option so is rarely used.

3.4 Individual young people have different needs and therefore individual solutions need to be found for each young person that best meets their situation. This can be in terms of location, type of property and ability to continue with their education, training or employment. For some young people safeguarding issues also need to be considered and there may be areas of the borough where it is not appropriate for them to be placed. Other young people may be young parents and will therefore need family size accommodation. Some young people who have been placed out of borough for significant time may wish to remain in that location and so arrangements are made where appropriate to facilitate this, usually in the private sector.

3.5 Social Workers from the Leaving Care Team or the Horizons 20 plus team, work with the young person to prepare them to live independently and support them through the application process and transition. Young people are also given preparation support in their placements – whether this is Foster care, residential care or semi independent accommodation. However given the complex demands of managing a tenancy at a young age a number of young people do struggle with this responsibility.

3.6 Quota housing in council stock or through nominations to local housing associations has been the main route through which care leavers have been provided with permanent housing in recent years. The pattern of allocation of quota properties has been as follows:

- 2010/11 – 45 places
- 2011/12 – 60 places
- 2012/13 – 59 places
- 2013/14 –60 places.

Young people bid through the Locata system, similar to any other nominees and this process takes some time, therefore nominations have historically run over from one year to the next.

3.17 During 2013/14 there have been considerable pressures on housing stock and as a result, only about half of those nominated were housed before April 2014 leading to the quota allocation for care leavers being reduced to resolve the backlog from previous years. Pressures on quota supply have arisen from a number of sources. This includes the major regeneration schemes taking place on a number of estates that have significantly reduced availability in the short and medium term. There has also been increased pressure on Studio and 1 bed properties due to benefit changes and the bedroom tax, with some tenants downsizing to smaller properties and changes in Council policy targeting low income families and other priority groups for allocation. The impact of all these issues is a significant reduction in stock and quota properties available for a range of vulnerable priority groups, including young people leaving care.

3.18 Discussions have been ongoing with local housing associations to try and increase capacity in this area but to date there has been limited progress.

3.19 During 2014/15 the remaining quota nominations from 2013/14 have been successfully rehoused with only a further 6 nominations during 2014/15 being accepted. A further 49 young people are currently waiting to move on to suitable accommodation in 2014/15. It is unclear at this stage what the allocation from 2015/16 will be or in the current year and this will be considered as part of the consultation process.

3.20 As a result of the reduction in available quota properties there have been delays in moving some young people on from their current placements such as foster care or semi independent accommodation. This has led to an in year budget pressure of approx. £500k. It is anticipated that there is demand for approx. 80 places this year as 20 nominees were ongoing from the previous year's allocation.

3.21 At this point 49 young people are ready and waiting to move in to independent accommodation and discussions are taking place with Housing on how best to meet these young people's needs.

Future demand is anticipated to be approx. 60 young people leaving care and requiring local accommodation each year.

3.21 Housing colleagues are committed to continuing to work with Childrens services to find suitable alternatives in the Housing Association and Registered Social Landlords Sector and suitable options in the private rented sector and these discussions are ongoing.

3.22 Children's services will also review its support in terms of preparation and transition to ensure that young people are as well prepared as they can be to take on responsibilities successfully where they are nominated for their own tenancies.

3.22 Housing are currently undertaking a 12 week public consultation on a revised allocations scheme and Members of the Corporate Parent Committee and the HSCC are encouraged to review the proposals and submit their views. The deadline for the consultation is early February. Recommendations will then be considered by Cabinet at a meeting in March 2015.

4. Financial

The current allocation system does not meet the requirements of the service and has resulted in a pressure of £500k this financial year, which is being covered by one-off savings elsewhere in the Children & Families budget.

5. Legal

Duties to children who are care leavers are contained within the Children Act 1989 (as amended by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. Reference should be had to sections 19 to 23 of the Act and Part II of Schedule 2 which set out the particular duties to plan and provide for eligible and relevant children leaving care. Young people leaving care are entitled to a suitable place to live and suitability is defined within the Care Leavers Regulations 2010 at Regulation 9.

Statutory guidance issued pursuant to Section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 is to be found here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/361534/CA1989_The_Children_Act_1989_guidance_and_regulations_V3_0610.pdf

This guidance was updated in October 2014. Chapter 7 relates particular to the provision of suitable accommodation to care leavers.

6. Value For Money

Children's Services are working closely with Housing colleagues and the Access to Resources (ART) Team to ensure that suitable accommodation options secured ensure value for money is achieved.

7. Sustainability Impact Appraisal

N/A

8. Risk Management

Needs are assessed on an individual basis to ensure suitable options are achieved for individual young people that are safe and minimise risks.

9. Community Safety

Community safety issues are considered in deciding suitable options for individual young people.

10. Links to the 5 Priorities for the Borough

Identifying suitable accommodation for individual young people leaving care is key to delivering on the 5 key priorities below:

The 5 Priorities are:

- **Making Ealing Safer**
- **Securing Public Services**
- **Securing Jobs and Homes**

- **Delivering Value for Money**
- **Making Ealing Cleaner**

11. Equalities, Human Rights and Community Cohesion

Young people's individual needs and rights must be considered in reaching individual suitable accommodation decisions.

12. Staffing/Workforce and Accommodation implications:

N/A

13. Property and Assets

N/A

14. Any other implications:

N/A

15. Consultation

Consultation process is about to begin on future housing allocations policy.

16. Timetable for Implementation

Ongoing – although the housing allocations consultation process relates to implementation of a revised policy from 2015/16.

17. Appendices

N/A

18. Background Information

N/A

Consultation

Name of consultee	Post held	Date sent to consultee	Date response received	Comments appear in paragraph:
Internal				
David Archibald	Executive Director	21/11/2014	21/11/2014	
Jane Batalona	Asst Director, Legal Services			e.g. 5. Legal
Amar Barot	Director, Finance			e.g. 4. Financial
Judith Finlay		21/11/2014	21/11/2014	
External				

Report History

Decision type:	Urgency item?
EITHER: Non-key decision OR For information (delete as applicable)	No (delete as applicable) [Is it a general or special urgency key decision, which was not included in the Forward Plan with at least one month's notice ?] If yes, set out the reasons both why the item was not included and why a decision cannot be deferred.
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