

Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel

DATE 09/09/2021
REPORT OF Lisa Arthey – Director of Children’s Services
SUBJECT Supported accommodation for young people
STATUS Open

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIM

- This report summarises work underway to ensure that North East Lincolnshire care leavers and vulnerable homeless young people have access to high quality supported accommodation. This contributes to many strategic priorities for the council but primarily it contributes to the **Together for All** priority “...develop partnership strategies and commissioning arrangements that maximise the safety of all members of the community who may experience physical, emotional, economic, or social harm because of the actions of others”.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is presented to the scrutiny panel in advance of the report going to Cabinet in October 2021. The Cabinet report will seek approval to undertaken work to improve the range of accommodation for children leaving care and for homeless young people.

MATTER(S) FOR CONSIDERATION

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

Often as part of their journey to independent living, care experienced young people will benefit from a period of time living in supported accommodation. The current range of supported accommodation available to Children’s Services, is detailed below.

Name	Provider	Number of places
Willows Project	NELC	16
Supported Lodgings	Humbercare	8
Ainslie Street	YMCA	3 / 4
Foresight Flats	Foresight Housing with NELC providing support	4/5
Eco Pods	NELC	3

In addition to the Children’s Services homes in the table above, there is also a range of supported accommodation available for adult care leavers, through the recently commissioned Housing Related Support (HRS) framework led by Housing Services.

The majority of our Care Leavers that are receiving HRS are living with either YMCA (in the foyer or main hostel), Doorstep Housing or Humbercare.

Discussion

The NELC Sufficiency Strategy was updated in March this year. The needs analysis that informed the strategy showed that we expected to need approximately 30 beds in supported accommodation, at the present time we have thirty-five places available, however there remain challenges in terms of meeting the needs of our care leavers. The reasons for this include: -

- Not all options are suitable for all of our young people, and this can mean that whilst we have capacity in some of our provision, there are no vacancies in the particular provision needed.
- There is a small but significant group of young adults, usually care leavers, who are unable to manage with the support available through HRS.

These two issues result in young people either having to live away from their hometown, or them experiencing frequent placement breakdowns and moving between a succession of temporary housing. For a few care leavers this has included B&B which is not considered to be appropriate for care leavers and is mostly forbidden by statutory guidance as indicated by the following:-

Bed and breakfast accommodation, including hotels and nightly let accommodation with shared facilities, is not considered suitable for care leavers aged under 25 and should only be used in exceptional circumstances and for short periods.

(Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities)

Because of the way that current provision has historically been managed, we currently require children to move at 18 from the options listed in the table above to provision managed by Housing. This is unhelpful for many young people as they lose their home and the relationships that they had developed. There is no fundamental reason why children should have to move at 18. There is a need to work more closely with adult services where this is appropriate to ensure that there can be a smooth transition for young people who move on to adult care.

We currently are not always able to provide the support that young people need when they first take on a tenancy of their own. For most the support available through HRS is sufficient but where it is not, we often are unable to readily source the extra support our young people need.

Central government have already legislated to prevent young people under 16 from being placed in supported accommodation from 1st September 2021. NELC only has young people aged 16+ in such accommodation so we are compliant with this requirement and there is no risk to the authority.

DfE are currently consulting about proposed national standards for supported accommodation. We have already reviewed our Willows service against the draft standards and are implementing an action plan to address the few areas where we are not compliant. We will work with Humbercare and if relevant YMCA, to ensure

that they are also able to meet the new standards.

Recognising the need to improve the accommodation available for care leavers and vulnerable young people aged 16 – 21, Housing and Children's Services are working toward jointly commission suitable provision.

The provision will:

- Allow young people to stay in their home at 18 if this is in their best interests
- Provide sufficient options to enable all young people to live in a good quality home with sufficient support to enable them to thrive

We are in the process of updating the needs analysis to better inform our plans but expect to deliver the following:

- ITT for floating support. This will ensure that we have quality approved provider(s) who can offer additional support to young people who need it
- Expanded Willows Project. This will provide a wider range of supported accommodation allowing it to provide homes for more young people, including those with the highest levels of need. This will also replace the YMCA Ainslie Street service once the contract comes to an end.
- Updated pathway between children's and housing services. This will detail how young people are able to remain living in supported accommodation at 18 as well as showing how they can then move either to HRS accommodation or ideally to full independence. As part of this we will ensure that costs are appropriately assigned to either Children's or Housing Services.
- Robust contract management of Humbercare Supported Lodgings to ensure that hosts receive the support and training they need to be able to meet the needs of our care leavers.
- Improved preparation for independence for our young people. A preparation for independence programme is being used in the Willows and we will ensure that by April 2022 it, or something equivalent, is being used with all young people preparing to leave care.
- Regular, engaging, communication to all social care and housing advice staff, detailing the range of accommodation options available for our young people.

Since the needs analysis is still to be completed these plans may change, it is anticipated that this work will be completed by April 2022.

Other matters which will be considered include:

- Personalised Housing Plans for all Care leavers as part of improved Pathway Planning. This has not been agreed but a discussion is required to determine whether it should become mandated for all / some care leavers.
- Improved outcomes monitoring for all young people in supported accommodation. We have recently introduced an outcome monitoring tool to the Willows and intend expanding to all supported living.
- How to ensure that the work described in this report compliments and contributes towards the Preparation for Adulthood strategy adopted by Children's and Adult Services.

2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Risks:

- Through providing higher levels of support to some young people we create dependence rather than independence. Will be mitigated by any new service being required to deliver a preparation for independence programme. The progress of residents will be measured using the recently introduced outcome progress tool.
- Provision fails to meet, soon to be introduced national standards. We are already aware of this and acting to ensure all services are compliant.
- Supported accommodation costs increase because of providing higher levels of support to some. This is mitigated by the significant savings that will be made through expanding in-house delivery and reducing expensive purchased provision.

Opportunities:

- Significant savings are possible for both Children's and Housing Services. Savings will be achieved through reducing spend on poor value external services and expensive temporary accommodation.
- NELC will be able to stop using B&B to house care leavers and will become compliant with Housing Guidance.
- Care Leavers living in good quality homes with the right levels of support are more able to access education or employment and less likely to need health services or criminal justice involvement. In this way the proposals are likely to contribute to many strategic priorities.
- Moving forward there is the prospect of working with adult services to ensure a consistent approach between children and adult social care which in turn will have positive impact on our young people.
- Through providing stable, good quality accommodation for our young people with the right levels of support we expect to see them maximising their ability to live independently and thus minimising the likelihood that they will need significant support from adult services. The approach is complementary to the recently approved Preparing for adulthood strategy that emphasises the need to support young people to be as independent as possible, without creating

3. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

There is a positive reputational implication for the council. Through improving its offer to care leavers and ensuring that they all have the kind of homes and support we would want for our own children, the council is demonstrating how it is a caring and responsive Corporate Parent.

4. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The activity detailed in this report is expected to create services with improved value for money. Externally provided supported accommodation is very expensive and of variable quality. By reducing our dependence on purchased services we are able to

improve the overall unit cost of our supported accommodation.

MONITORING COMMENTS

In the opinion of the author, this report does not contain recommended changes to policy or resources (people, finance, or physical assets). As a result, no monitoring comments have been sought from the Council's Monitoring Officer (Chief Legal Officer), Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance) or Strategic Workforce Lead.

5. WARD IMPLICATIONS

This is not yet clear but it is likely that supported accommodation for care leavers is sourced in many wards within the borough, it is anticipated that the support will ensure that care leavers are encouraged to engage with their local communities in a positive manner which in turn is likely to have a positive impact.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

7. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

James Purdie – Children's Commissioner

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