



Children and Young

People's Scrutiny Committee 20th March 2018

Housing issues - 16/17 year olds

Background

The Ofsted inspection in January 2017 highlighted our response to homeless 16 and 17 year olds as an area for development. Stating that:

"The response to young people aged 16 and 17 who present as homeless is inconsistent. Some young people receive high levels of support, while others are not suitably assessed. As a result, the local authority cannot be certain that staff have identified and met the needs of all young people at risk of homelessness, including those who should become looked after"

At the point of the inspection we had in place multi-agency pathway guidance "Supporting Young People aged 16 or 17 years old who are at risk of homelessness" which was published in 2015. The guidance outlined the referral and assessment process and how young people were supported. The inspection helped us to recognise how we could improve this guidance and practice locally. We have implemented a range of improvement measures.

Progress

The Duty Service are now the only Social Work team that undertake assessments of 16 and 17 year old in relation to housing needs. Where cases require stepping across from Targeted Family Support these do not follow the usual hub pathway. This allows for a consistent approach to ensuring that young people receive the right support.

In order to track cases the Duty Service now have a formal tracker. The tracker is a detailed document that records the details of all young people who present as homeless, actions taken and the outcome achieved for the Young Person.

Joint work between Social Care and the Housing team has been strengthened; experience, knowledge and expertise across the services have been used to facilitate positive outcomes for young people. We have been able to provide a more collaborative response for young people. The NCH Vulnerable Persons Panel runs fortnightly, this again allows case discussion to take place between the service manager for social care and housing aid manager.

Audit work has been undertaken specifically on young people who have presented as being homeless. From April to May 2017 15 cases were audited by the Service Manager which informed further areas for development.

Multi Agency guidance has been reviewed and will be re-circulated in March 2018

Team Meetings and Team Manager Development sessions have been held in respect of the response to young people who present as homeless.

Since April 2017, 47 16 and 17 year olds have presented as being homeless. 15 of these young people were assessed as being able to be referred through to Housing Aid for accommodation as they had been identified as having no additional needs. 19 young people were offered ongoing support either as children in need through social care or through the Targeted Family Support Teams. One young person who was assessed became looked after.

The audit findings and feedback from housing have helped change the way that we respond to young people who ask us for help and support.

The case audits evidence that most young people who presented as homeless have experienced significant difficulties in their lives. Since we have started tracking cases only one young person has presented for support who has not previously been known to Social Care. Often young people, who present have offending, risk taking or challenging behaviours. If these young people are referred through to housing without the offer of additional support, the information from housing suggests that these young people are often evicted from providers, as they do not possess the skills to live independently. A high proportion of these young people return to live with their families.

Consequently, we have further strengthened our response to young people who present at homeless. Young people are first seen by Targeted Family Support Workers. This allows our initial response to be one of looking at support from early intervention services. If this is not appropriate, a full Social Work assessment is undertaken. The most recent assessments show that social workers and team managers are now focusing on supporting the prevention of young people becoming homeless and therefore requiring accommodation.

Care Leavers

For care leavers the provision of appropriate accommodation is an essential part of making a successful transition into adulthood. The Leaving Care service in the City Council has an excellent working relationship with Nottingham City Homes who are supportive of our young people. In January 2018 86.5% of Care Leavers in Nottingham City were in suitable accommodation, against the statistical neighbour performance of 84%.

For those with additional vulnerabilities who go through the housing gateway there is a limited resource in terms of accommodation. We are currently working with housing to understand how best to manage this cohort of young people, both in terms of maximising the use of the existing resources and exploring how we may be able to support young people to live in other forms of accommodation

Unaccompanied Minors who come into care are supported to achieve immigration status. If they leave care whilst their immigration status remains unresolved, their housing costs are met through the No Recourse to Public funds budget. This is because they are not eligible to claim Social housing and as such, they are not eligible to housing benefit.

Recommendations

- To note the contents of this update
- Duty Service to continue to develop their expertise in this area improving the support provided to young people at risk of homelessness
- Leaving Care Team to continue to develop support for young adults who may be at risk of living in unsuitable accommodation.

Report for Councillor Mellen and Scrutiny Committee.

Officers:

Helen Blackman Director Children's Integrated Services

Clive Chambers Head of Service Children in Care

Tajinder Madahar Head of Children's Duty and Targeted Services

9th March 2018