

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD – 21st July 2014

Title of paper:	Suitable Accommodation	
Director(s)/ Corporate Director(s):	Alison Michalska – Corporate Director Children & Families Helen Blackman – Director Children’s Social Care	Wards affected: All
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Other colleagues who have provided input:	Lynn Pearce - Senior Personal Advisor Alan Monaghan - Senior Personal Advisor Tina Thurley - Principal Analyst	
Date of consultation with Portfolio Holder(s) (if relevant)	1st July 2014	
Relevant Council Plan Strategic Priority:		
Cutting unemployment by a quarter		<input type="checkbox"/>
Cut crime and anti-social behaviour		<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure more school leavers get a job, training or further education than any other City		<input type="checkbox"/>
Your neighbourhood as clean as the City Centre		<input type="checkbox"/>
Help keep your energy bills down		<input type="checkbox"/>
Good access to public transport		<input type="checkbox"/>
Nottingham has a good mix of housing		<input type="checkbox"/>
Nottingham is a good place to do business, invest and create jobs		<input type="checkbox"/>
Nottingham offers a wide range of leisure activities, parks and sporting events		<input type="checkbox"/>
Support early intervention activities		<input type="checkbox"/>
Deliver effective, value for money services to our citizens		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Summary of issues (including benefits to citizens/service users):		
Section 23B of the children act 1989 requires that Local Authorities provide relevant young people with, and maintain them in, suitable accommodation Nottingham City Council works with Housing Departments and providers to ensure its Care Leavers are given access to and sustain tenancies within suitable accommodation.		
Recommendation(s):		
1	That the Board continues to support the work undertaken to provide suitable accommodation to Nottingham City’s Care Leavers.	

1. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 Nottingham City Council as a Local Authority has a legislative duty under the Children Act (1989) to provide and sustain suitable housing for its care leavers.

2. BACKGROUND (INCLUDING OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION)

2.1 Nottingham City Council under Section 23B(8) of the Children Act (1989) has a duty to provide and sustain relevant children with suitable accommodation. The Act defines suitable accommodation as:-

- That which, so far is reasonably practicable, is suitable for the young person in respect of their needs which includes health needs.
- That the responsible Authority has satisfied itself as to the character and suitability of the landlord/provider.
- Accommodation that complies with Health and Safety requirements.
- Has taken into account young peoples wishes and feelings.
- Has taken into account a young person's education, training and employment needs.

2.2 The Act also places a duty on Local Authorities who provide Children's Services to take steps, as far as is reasonably practicable, to identify sufficient accommodation within its area to meet the needs of its children in care and care leaver population. This is known as the Sufficiency Duty.

2.3 In deciding as to whether accommodation is suitable, Local Authorities must have regard to schedule 2 of The Care Leaver Regulations (2010). This schedule should not be read as a simple checklist and an evaluation of the suitability of accommodation must be made.

2.4 Within Nottingham City, the Placement Service commissions accommodation from private providers and provides internal semi-independence provision. We can therefore provide a range of accommodation which relates to the diverse needs of care leavers. This includes:-

1. Enabling young people to remain in accommodation in which they lived whilst being looked after i.e. Staying Put.
2. Supported Lodgings
3. Foyers – Supported Housing
4. Small Group Homes
5. Independent accommodation with floating support.
6. Shared accommodation with and without support.

2.5 As the majority of young people approach their 18th birthday they will be working towards obtaining their own tenancy. Nottingham City Council works closely with Nottingham City Homes to ensure those properties are suitable. There is robust Housing protocol agreement which priorities housing for care leavers. This is reviewed and amended annually with the aim being to provide good quality accommodation to our care leavers.

2.6 Personal Advisors work closely with 'Housing Patch Managers' to ensure young people are provided with the necessary support to sustain their own tenancies. There are regular meetings between Nottingham City Council and Nottingham City Homes to alert to any potential issues in respect of young people and potential risk to their tenancies. Support is provided by Nottingham City Homes in respect of financial support and is well accessed by young people.

2.7 There is a national focus on 'Staying Put' in foster care; however some of our children live in residential care. We have developed a wider support option for young people to stay in supported housing. Nottingham City Council has developed its own internal semi-independence provision. It currently provides 16 beds within its estate. This comprises of 6 beds at the recently de-registered Vivian Avenue, 4 beds at Sophie Road, 2 beds at Chippendale and 3 newly formed beds at a new home on Broomhill Road. This allows young people to effectively 'Stay Put' post 18 if assessed as not being ready to take up a tenancy, as particularly vulnerable or in appeal in respect of their immigration status. This

includes the provision of a dedicated Personal Advisor to young people leaving residential care.

2.8 Nottingham City Council's Placement Service are also reviewing their Commissioning strategy – the "16 Plus Enhanced Accommodation Strategy" – and are on schedule to have this review completed by the end of September 2014.

2.9 Nottingham City Council also provides suitable accommodation during non-term time for those young people accessing higher education.

2.10 Making the transition to adulthood can be an extremely stressful process for children in care but one that can also help young people assert their identity as they are able to make life choices about how they furnish their own homes, thus improving their self esteem and confidence. As such, Nottingham City Council provide the allocation of a "Setting Up Home" grant to ensure they have appropriate equipment and household items to set up safe, secure and stable accommodation. This is assessed on an individual basis so that resources are allocated appropriately.

2.11 Performance in respect of suitable accommodation is requested monthly and the DFE requires we now measure a young peoples accommodation status during a three month period around their 19th, 20th, and 21st birthdays.

The 2013/14 end of year performance stood at (targets are stated in brackets);

19 Years 89.6% (90%)

20 Years 83% (85%)

21 Years 77% (80%)

It should be acknowledged that our performance figures are adversely affected by the following factors;

- Non engagers: Care leavers are not obligated to engage with our leaving care service and as a result it not possible to establish and record the suitability of their accommodation. Care Leavers who do not engage are automatically recorded as 'not in suitable accommodation'.
- Young People in Custody: While in custody care leavers cannot be considered to be in suitable accommodation.

3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED IN MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 None

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING VALUE FOR MONEY/VAT)

4.1 None

5. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES (INCLUDING LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND CRIME AND DISORDER ACT IMPLICATIONS)

5.1 Due to a lack of semi-independent provision, there is a risk to providing suitable accommodation to care leavers who require extended support. Non engagers also present a risk as it is not possible to establish if they are in suitable accommodation.

6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Has the equality impact been assessed?

Not needed (report does not contain proposals or financial decisions) **X**

No

Yes – Equality Impact Assessment attached

Due regard should be given to the equality implications identified in the EIA.

7. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS OTHER THAN PUBLISHED WORKS OR THOSE DISCLOSING CONFIDENTIAL OR EXEMPT INFORMATION

7.1 None

8. PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT

8.1 Children Act (1989)

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/23B>

8.2 The Care Leavers (England Regulations (2010)

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/2571/pdfs/uksi_20102571_en.pdf