

19 March 2013**Agenda Item: 4****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND CULTURE
UPDATE ON THE YOUTH HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY****Purpose of the Report**

1. To update the Committee on the delivery of the Youth Homelessness Strategy and supporting commissioning plan approved by Policy Committee in July 2012.

Information and Advice**Background**

2. In July 2012, following a ten-week public consultation, Policy Committee agreed the Nottinghamshire Youth Homelessness Strategy. The Strategy was produced under commission by HLG, a local sector specialist in homelessness, in partnership with the Council.
3. Key changes in approach to youth homelessness set out in the Strategy were:
 - **A change in the definition of young people** – Supporting People defined 'young people' as those between 16 and 25 years of age. The Strategy altered that definition to 16 to 21 years of age
 - **Shared operational responsibility** – the Targeted Support Service working with Children's Social Care to improve the Council's response to youth homelessness
 - **A reconfigured estate of supported accommodation for homeless young people** – Supported housing to be developed dedicated to 16 and 17 year olds, to protect those most vulnerable, with short term assessment beds to support a commitment to eliminate the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for this age group. In addition, the introduction of units to support 16 to 21 year olds with different levels of support dependent upon need was proposed
 - **A new pooled budget arrangement and commissioning accountability** – the Targeted Support Service to take responsibility for all commissioning of young people's supported accommodation with a pooled budget from the Adult Social Care, Health and Public Protection (ASCH&PP) and Children, Families and Cultural Services departments

- **A challenge to improve quality and reduce cost** – a move over time to a more consistent hourly rate for support costs, coupled with the introduction of financial incentives for providers for good performance
- **A range of floating support** – Supporting People, through ASCH&PP, to fund an all-age floating support service for people in their own tenancies.

Progress to Date

4. Significant progress has been made in implementing the Strategy, driven by the County Council and through partnership work with district and borough councils and accommodation providers through a newly established Youth Homelessness Forum.
5. The pooled budget arrangement described in paragraph 3 above is now in place.
6. The new definition of “young people” has been implemented and a new protocol for dealing with 16 and 17 year olds who become homeless, a contentious issue subject to much legal debate, has been agreed between the County Council and all but one of the second tier councils. This includes a move to a single prioritisation model and waiting list for supported accommodation for young people, ensuring those most vulnerable are dealt with swiftly and that there is greater focus on whether a negotiated return home for the young person can be achieved. Since 1 April 2012 the Targeted Support Service has received 469 referrals for young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Of these, 144 were 16 and 17 year olds who received ongoing support from the Service.
7. The introduction of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the new protocol have required close attention to be paid to the effective implementation of shared operational responsibilities within the Children, Families and Cultural Services Department. To support this, in December 2012 the Early Years and Young People’s Sub-Committee agreed additional staffing within the Targeted Support Service to provide increased interventions for homeless young people.
8. Progress has been made in reconfiguring the estate of supported accommodation for young people. Contracts have been revised so that units have a 16-17 year old or 16-21 year old remit. To date reductions to services have been limited by challenging hourly rates for support charges and improving value for money.
9. The identification and use of assessment beds within Supported Accommodation services was investigated but not pursued due to reported difficulties with claiming housing benefit on bed spaces of this type. Operationally, this has caused little problem and the commitment to eliminate the use of bed and breakfast for 16/17 year olds remains.

10. Some specific changes to supported accommodation projects are detailed below:

- **Rock Court, Mansfield** – there has been an increase in the level of support provided and additional recruitment of staff. Specialist bail beds have been created, helping to control the number of young people becoming looked after by the Local Authority in secure settings
- **Sandfield Close, Mansfield** – has seen an increase in support hours delivered and the recruitment of an extra worker
- **Supported Lodgings, County-wide** – a two tier system has become operational offering hosts a higher payment for working with more challenging service users
- **Mansfield YMCA** – the contract for this service delivered by the Kirkby Trust ended in June 2012, with operational responsibility reverting to Nottinghamshire YMCA (without ongoing funding from the Council). To assist Nottinghamshire YMCA in its efforts to continue to deliver a service a transitional payment of £32,000 was awarded. The YMCA continues to be a young people's accommodation project and is part of the single prioritisation and waiting list model described in paragraph 6
- **Stepping Stones, Eastwood** – the Support Provider was unable to respond to the need to make hourly rate reductions and as a result took the decision to withdraw from the contract. The service is currently being tendered and a new provider will be in place by May 2013. The current provider will continue to deliver services until that time
- **A range of Floating Support** – in October 2012 a new homelessness prevention service delivered by Framework Housing Association and funded by Supporting People (ASCH&PP) became operational. This service supports people of all ages (16+) to find and maintain a tenancy.

Next Steps

11. All of the supported accommodation services for young people will be re-tendered during 2013-14 so that new services will be in place by April 2014. A fixed hourly rate for support costs will form part of the specification, which will help control costs and address the significant variations in the rates currently paid to providers. It is also proposed that up to 10% of the contract value will be incentivised payments, paying on a "by results" basis in relation to provider performance in reducing evictions and successfully moving young people into settled independent accommodation.
12. The Youth Homelessness Forum will be concentrating on two main issues during the next six months. The first will be improving joint working and developing best practice in preventing youth homelessness. This will include multi-agency approaches to helping young people stay or return home, particularly when there has been family conflict. It will also look at the

education of young people in schools and colleges about housing and homelessness issues.

13. The second issue the Forum will address will be that of successfully moving young people from supported accommodation to settled, independent housing. This will include a review of life skills provision for this group, the role of private landlords and social housing and of the support networks available to new tenants.

Other Options Considered

14. Actions taken will continue to be in line within the agreed Strategy. Regular updates will continue to be provided and recommendations made in the event of risks being presented or the assessment of needs changing.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

15. This report is for noting.

Statutory and Policy Implications

16. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Implications for Service Users

17. Service users were consulted in the development of this Strategy and the resulting commissioning proposals. The Strategy was formulated to maximise the outcomes for service users within available resources.

Financial Implications

18. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Equalities Implications

19. An equality impact assessment was undertaken along with the original strategy. When data is available for the full financial year a further equality impact assessment will be completed.

Crime and Disorder Implications

20. The Strategy takes account of the Council's duties to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and to prevent youth offending and re-offending under the Crime and Disorder Act (1998). It also includes measures to ensure the Local Authority can respond to measures within the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (2012) on the transfer of responsibilities for

funding juvenile remands through the creation of specific supported accommodation provision for young people on bail.

Safeguarding of Children Implications

21. The Strategy has been formulated with the specific aim of safeguarding young people through preventing homelessness and the improvement of services to children aged 16 and 17 years who find themselves in housing need. Findings from Serious Case Reviews from across England and Wales have been utilised in developing the strategy.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That:

- 1) the update on the delivery of the Youth Homelessness Strategy and supporting commissioning plan be noted
- 2) a further update report be provided in October 2013.

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Constitutional Comments

22. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

Financial Comments (KLA 23/01/13)

23. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers

Youth Homelessness Strategy – report to Policy Committee, 3 July 2012 (published)

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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