

**REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE EARLY YEARS AND YOUNG
PEOPLE'S SUB-COMMITTEE****YOUTH HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY****Purpose of the Report**

1. To invite the Committee to approve the proposed revised Youth Homelessness Strategy (**Appendix 1** & Executive Summary at **Appendix 2**) and supporting commissioning proposals (**Appendix 3**) as recommended by the Early Years and Young People's Sub-Committee.

Information and Advice**Background**

2. In June 2011 Council approved reductions to the Supporting People budget, which pays for support services for vulnerable people in housing need, although not the accommodation itself. Included within these vulnerable groups were young people, defined as those between 16 and 25 years of age, and teenage parents. Amongst the proposals was a commitment to produce a Youth Homelessness Strategy following a review of existing priorities and the effectiveness of current provision.
3. In March 2012 a draft Strategy and accompanying commissioning proposals were presented to Cabinet and a ten-week public consultation then commenced. The Strategy was produced under commission by HLG, a local sector specialist in homelessness, in partnership with senior managers from the Council.

Proposed Key Changes in Approaches to Youth Homelessness

4. The draft strategy contained significant detail on the proposed approaches to address youth homelessness. These key approaches are described below.
 - **A change in the definition of young people** – Supporting People defined 'young people' as those between 16 and 25 years of age. The Strategy proposes a new definition of 16 to 21 years of age. This new definition would include those homeless 16 and 17 year olds, for whom the County Council has a statutory responsibility and also recognises the importance of the transition to adulthood. Transition is important in ensuring effective move-on for those reaching their eighteenth birthday, assists young people leaving care and ensures intervention for a vulnerable group who without support would provide a challenge to a number of public services at significant cost.

- **Shared operational responsibility** – homeless 16 and 17 year olds have been historically dealt with by Reception and Assessment Teams within Children's Social Care (CSC), on occasion distracting social workers from pressing child protection matters and risking leaving young people without a service to meet their needs. Following a successful pilot in North Nottinghamshire, CSC will share this responsibility with the recently formed Targeted Support Service, which will contain dedicated accommodation staff. This will help to protect social work time whilst ensuring that the Council's legal obligations for the initial assessment of homeless children are met. Targeted Support will also be working with a large cohort of vulnerable young people and will act early to reduce the risks of homelessness, in particular through a strong commitment to family work and the training of staff in mediation.
- **A reconfigured estate of supported accommodation for homeless young people** – historically young people's housing units have taken young people across the age range of the Supporting People definition. This has created concerns about safeguarding, particularly when those who are legally 'children' are placed with adults who can present significant risks or negative influence. The proposal is to have units 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. There will also be units to support 16 to 21 year olds with different levels of support dependent upon need. Within the estate there would also be distinct provision for care leavers (to support exit from higher cost care placements), teenage parents and bail beds (to mitigate against the future impact of the transfer of custodial remand costs from central government to the Council).
- **A new pooled budget arrangement and commissioning accountability** – an agreement has been reached for the transfer of the budget for young people's supported accommodation from Adult Social Care, Health and Public Protection (ASCHPP) to Children, Families and Cultural Services. This funding will continue to be reduced in line with the Supporting People business case until 2014-15 and 10% will be retained by ASCHPP to make provision for the 22 to 25 year age group no longer covered by the young people's agenda. The transferred Supporting People funding will be pooled with £150,000 of Children's Social Care revenue funding to provide a commissioning budget for support services for homeless young people. The responsibility for commissioning supported accommodation for young people will also transfer from ASCHPP to the Targeted Support and Youth Justice Service.
- **A challenge to improve quality and reduce cost** – at present hourly costs for support vary considerably between providers. We plan to provide a challenge to the hourly costs in order to preserve as high a number of units of support as possible. We also plan to look at moving towards a simple 'payment by results' model to drive improvements, particularly in relation to eviction and planned move on to independent living.
- **A range of floating support** – Supporting People, through ASCHP, will continue to fund an all-age floating support service for people in their own tenancies. For young people this will be supplemented through the work of Targeted Support and Children's Social Care, who will have ongoing contact with some young people in their own tenancies.

Responses to the Consultation

5. People were able to respond to the consultation in a number of different ways:
 - via an online survey available through the Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) website
 - by completing a consultation questionnaire
 - by writing to the Council
 - through face-to-face and telephone interviews, directed towards service users
 - by attending a service provider, landlord and district council event
6. In total 109 responses were received by the County Council. The views expressed in these responses varied significantly and were at times contradictory. Important issues and themes presented included:
 - a lack of clarity around the application of the Mental Capacity Act (2005) to service users in supported housing settings in light of Serious Case Review findings
 - a need for monitoring equality and diversity needs to ensure equality of outcome is being achieved for different service user groups
 - a concern regarding the capacity of services for those aged 21-25, given the proposed change to the definition of 'young people'
 - a call for a greater understanding of how Targeted Support services will link operationally with supported accommodation providers
 - local intelligence on young people's housing needs
 - business and local operational obstacles to implementing some of the proposals
 - a concern about the level of funding available and the geographical spread of accommodation units
 - anxiety about the impact on wider society should street homelessness increase
 - a need for recognition that the agenda connects with duties to reduce child poverty.

Action Taken in Response to Consultation Analysis

7. All of the responses have been assessed and where possible changes have been made to the strategy, action plan (attached as **Appendix 4**) and equality assessment to take the comments into account. Where responses were contradictory a further assessment was undertaken to see whether any particular response had more validity.
8. Specific actions taken following an analysis of responses include:
 - inclusion within the Equality Impact Assessment and Action Plan of measures to ensure that there is monitoring of the response provided and outcomes achieved for groups with protected characteristics
 - actions to audit the use of measures under the Mental Capacity Act (2005)
 - clarification that 10% of the original budget available will be retained for homelessness services for the 22-25 age group who make up less than 13% of those in the current young people's supported accommodation. This is in addition to a range of commissioned supported accommodation services for those aged over 18 and additional grant funding to individual providers of homelessness support

- agreement of transition funding and a support package to enable the Mansfield YMCA, where support is to be decommissioned, to establish a new operating model as an independent provider so as to keep available 26 units of accommodation for 16 to 25 year olds
- actions to promote children's service pathways and the role of different elements of children's services with supported accommodation providers
- changes to the proposed 'estate' of supported accommodation, including an additional investment of £450,000 of re-profiled spending to increase capacity and support hours where needed
- recognition within the Strategy of the links to the child poverty agenda.

Other Options Considered

9. As the process for agreeing the Strategy was agreed by Cabinet on 14 March 2012, it is not necessary to consider other options.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

10. Having taken into account a wide range of views in the review of the original Strategy and commissioning proposals, the revised Strategy represents the most effective way to respond to the issue of youth homelessness in coming years within the resources available.

Statutory and Policy Implications

11. 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

12. Service users have been consulted in the development of this Strategy and the resulting commissioning proposals. The proposals change the availability, location and style of delivery of some services. The Strategy has been formulated to maximise the outcomes for service users within available resources.

Financial Implications

13. The budget for commissioning supported accommodation is constituted from former Supporting People funding and finances within Children, Families and Cultural Services. Following the consultation an additional amount of £450,000 has been found from Supporting People reserves to support this agenda over the next three years. The revised budget available is presented below:

	2012-13 £	2013-14 £	2014-15 £
Total budget	1,990,255	1,803,001	1481,384

14. It is proposed to make £32,000 of transition funding available to Nottinghamshire YMCA in 2012-13 to support a new business model for the 26 unit premises in Mansfield. The finance needed for this will be secured from reserves held within the Adult Social Care, Health and Public Protection Department.

Equalities Implications

15. As part of the process of making decisions and changing policy, public authorities are required by law to think about the need to:
 - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics (as defined by equalities legislation) and those who do not
 - Foster good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not
16. Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are a means by which a public authority can assess the potential impact that proposed decisions / changes to policy could have on the community and those with protected characteristics. They may also identify potential ways to reduce any impact that a decision / policy change could have. If it is not possible to reduce the impact, the EIA can explain why. Decision makers must understand the potential implications of their decisions on people with protected characteristics.
17. An EIA has been undertaken and is available as a background paper. Decision makers must give due regard to the implications for protected groups when considering this report.

Crime and Disorder Implications

18. The Strategy and commissioning proposals take 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

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

RECOMMENDATION/S

That:

- 1) the proposed revised Youth Homelessness Strategy and supporting commissioning proposals be approved
- 2) a progress report be brought back to Policy Committee in six months.

Councillor Lynn Sykes

Chairman of the Early Years and Young People's Sub-Committee

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Constitutional Comments (LM 28/06/12)

20. The Policy Committee has delegated authority within the Constitution to approve the recommendations in the report.

Financial Comments (NDR 27/06/12)

21. The financial implications are set out in paragraphs 13 and 14 of the report.

Background Papers

Equality Impact Assessment

Commissioned Provision Maps for 2012, 2013 and 2014

Report to Early Years and Young People's Sub-Committee on 3 July 2012: 'Youth Homelessness Strategy'

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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