

A strategy to prevent and tackle youth homelessness in Nottinghamshire 2012 – 2015: Executive Summary

Our vision is to improve the life chances, life changes and life choices of young people in Nottinghamshire who are threatened with or experiencing homelessness, and ensure all young people have the opportunities they need to make a successful transition to adulthood and independence, **by providing a range of support services most appropriate to their needs and circumstances.**

In June 2011 Nottinghamshire County Council approved reductions to the Supporting People budget, which pays for support for vulnerable people in housing need. Included within these vulnerable groups were young people, defined as those aged between sixteen and twenty five 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.

This Strategy contains significant detail on the approach we are proposing to youth homelessness and is supported by a clear commissioning plan and proposals to strengthen joint working between agencies. **Our vision is to improve the life chances, life changes and life choices of young people in Nottinghamshire** who are threatened with or experiencing homelessness, and ensure all young people have the opportunities they need to make a successful transition to adulthood and independence, **by providing a range of support services most appropriate to their needs and circumstances.**

The key aims of this strategy are to:

- **Intervene as early as possible** to prevent housing instability and homelessness from occurring or persisting
- **Ensure service pathways are planned and integrated** to better meet the needs of young people experiencing housing instability and homelessness
- **Safeguard young people who are at risk** because of housing instability or homelessness
- **Improve transitions to adulthood and independence** for young people at risk of becoming entrenched in a cycle of housing instability and homelessness
- **Make better use of available resources** to maintain a sufficient range of accommodation-based services with support for young people experiencing housing instability and homelessness by negotiating better value for money with service providers and remodelling existing service provision

There are a number of key changes to our current approach which run as a theme throughout the strategy and which have a specific rationale. These are described below.

- **A change in the definition of young people** – Supporting People defined “young people” as those between sixteen and twenty-five years of age. The Strategy proposes a new definition of sixteen to twenty-one years of age
- **Shared operational responsibility** Following a successful pilot in North Nottinghamshire, Children’s Social Care will share this responsibility with the recently formed Targeted Support Service, which will contain dedicated accommodation staff.
- **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 sixteen and seventeen year olds, to protect those most vulnerable and with short term assessment beds to support a commitment to eliminate the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for this age group.
- **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
- **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 support system in Targeted Support and Children’s Social Care, for example in respect of care leavers.

Summary of statutory duties of Children's and Housing services to young people who may be homeless

As a two-tier local authority area, the county council has statutory responsibility for providing children's services and the district and borough councils are housing authorities with responsibility for homelessness. Historically this has led to confusion over who is responsible for what and when. The following section provides an overview of statutory responsibilities towards homeless young people from children's services and housing authorities.

Status	Children's services obligations	Housing authority obligations
16/17 homeless, not previously known to children's services	Duty to assess the needs of the child (s17), and to provide accommodation (s20) for a child in need aged 16 or over whose welfare is likely to be seriously prejudiced if they are not accommodated	Duty to assess status (s184) and provide interim accommodation (s188) pending an assessment by Children's Services. Duty to accommodate if offer of s20 accommodation is declined
'Relevant children' aged 16/17	Duty to provide accommodation for an 'eligible child' (care leavers aged 16-17 years unless they are satisfied that his/her welfare does not require it	No duty to secure accommodation
'Former relevant Children' aged 18-21	Duty to provide assistance, including assistance with accommodation, to the extent that his/her welfare requires it	Duty to secure accommodation if they become homeless through no fault of their own and they are vulnerable as a result of having been in care (s193)
'Former relevant Children' aged 22-24	Duty to provide continuing assistance if they remain in education or training	Duty to secure accommodation if they become homeless through no fault of their own and they are vulnerable as a result of having been in care (s193)
18-24, not previously known to children's services	No duty to provide assistance or accommodation	Duty to assess applicants need/status under (s184), and secure interim accommodation (s193) if no other suitable accommodation is available (s197) repealed, new provisions in Localism Bill to discharge duty with offer of private rented)
'Intentionally homeless' aged 16-17, unknown or known	Duty to assess the needs of the child (s17) if unknown, and to provide accommodation (s20) for a child in need aged 16 or over whose welfare is likely to be seriously prejudiced if they are not accommodated	No duty to permanently re-house. Duty to secure interim accommodation for a reasonable period & provide advice/ assistance to find own accommodation (s188) Refer to Children's services (with consent)

Future service provision and funding

The majority of accommodation-based services for homeless young people have been commissioned through the Supporting People team within Adult Social Care & Health since 2003. From **April 2012**, this responsibility will transfer to Children, Families & Cultural Services through Target Support. The majority of these services are of high quality and generally service providers achieve good outcomes in working with young people. A total of **224 units** of accommodation with support will transfer in **October 2012**.

The inherited budget proposal for these services will be supplemented with £150,000 from existing children's services budgets. Following the consultation an additional amount of £450,000 has been re-designated from related areas of council business 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	£1,481,384

NCCs commissioning priorities for accommodation-based services from 2012-15 are outlined in Appendix 1.

NCC will seek to achieve its commissioning priorities within the committed budget allocation by price challenging existing service providers and negotiating the remodelling of existing service provision where possible. If this is not possible or new services are required we will invite tenders from existing service providers, but we reserve the discretion to include other providers with successful track records in any future tendering.

NCC intends to tender supported accommodation based services for young people during 2013, with new contracts anticipated to commence in April 2014.