

## **REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES**

### **YOUTH HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. This report provides a draft of the Youth Homelessness Strategy for Nottinghamshire and associated commissioning proposals and seeks Cabinet's consent to a formal public consultation.

#### **Information and Advice**

##### **Background**

2. In June 2011 the County Council committed to produce a Youth Homelessness Strategy following a review of its priorities and provision. The strategy and the supporting commissioning plan set out the Council's commitment to support vulnerable sixteen to twenty-five year olds and teenage parents.
3. This report, appended with the draft strategy and commissioning proposals, sets out the conclusions from that review and proposals for future provision.

#### **Formulation of the Strategy and Commissioning Proposals**

4. The strategy (**Appendix A**) has been produced under commission by HLG, a local sector specialist in homelessness and supported accommodation, in partnership with senior managers from children's services and the Council's Improvement Programme over a period of six months. During that time a series of focus groups and interviews have been carried out with service users, officers from the County Council, District and Borough Councils and providers of supported accommodation. Local and national data, legal rulings, policy and legislative changes have been analysed.
5. Commissioning proposals (**Appendix B**) have been produced in line with the conclusions of the strategy document. An expert group from Children, Families and Cultural Services, the Improvement Programme and Corporate Procurement have met on several occasions to formulate the recommendations for commissioning changes which, if approved, are scheduled to come into effect from October 2012. Contingency funding has been identified to maintain the status quo in relation to young people's housing support until that time. It is not proposed to carry out a full recommissioning exercise during that period but to negotiate service specification changes with existing providers within the existing contracts.

## Key Changes in Approaches to Youth Homelessness

6. The strategy contains significant detail on the approach we are proposing to youth homelessness, particularly from a County Council perspective. There are a number of key changes which run as a theme throughout the document 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. This new definition would include those homeless sixteen and seventeen 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 sixteen and seventeen 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 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. There will also be units to support sixteen to twenty-one 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 twenty-two to twenty-five 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. The responsibility for commissioning supported accommodation for young people will also transfer from ASCHPP to the Group Manager for Targeted Support and Youth Justice

- **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 ASCHPP, 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.

### **Implementation and Commissioning**

7. It is proposed to implement the strategy by October 2012 and an action plan has been drafted with clear milestones and responsibilities. It is not proposed to re-tender services during 2012 but to renegotiate service specifications with providers who are already under contract.

### **Other Options Considered**

8. The option of retaining the young people's elements of Supporting People funding and the associated governance within Adult Social Care, Health and Public Protection was considered but integration with wider children and young people's functions was felt best in terms of securing outcomes for young people and for financial efficacy.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

9. It is recommended that a ten week consultation is held on the strategy and commissioning proposals due to the number of stakeholders potentially affected by the proposals and high level of public interest in young people and homelessness.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

10. 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**

11. 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.

## **Equalities Implications**

12. 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.
13. 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.
14. 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.
15. Actions have been identified within the strategy to minimise any negative impact on those with protected characteristics. The impact assessment will form part of the consultation.

## **Crime and Disorder Implications**

16. 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).

## **Safeguarding of Children Implications**

17. The 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.

## **Finance Implications**

18. The budget for commissioning supported accommodation is constituted from former Supporting People funding and finances within Children, Families and Cultural Services. The available budget for the next three years is as follows:

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
<b>Total budget</b>	£1,949,225	£1,602,001	£1,273,384

## RECOMMENDATION/S

That:

- 1) approval is given to a ten week public consultation prior to final agreement of the approach contained in the strategy
- 2) it be noted that, once the consultation is completed, recommendations will be made to County Council or the appropriate committee.

**Councillor Philip Owen**  
**Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

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### **Constitutional Comments (LM 21/02/12)**

19. Cabinet may approve the 10 week public consultation in relation to the Youth Homelessness Strategy. Cabinet will then refer their findings and make recommendations to the County Council.

### **Financial Comments (NDR 24/02/12)**

20. The financial implications are set out in paragraph 18 of the report.

## **Background Papers**

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.

Appendices to the draft strategy to prevent and tackle youth homelessness in Nottinghamshire:

- Appendix 1: Relevant Case Law
- Appendix 2: Learning from Serious Case Reviews
- Appendix 3: Estimating levels of youth homelessness
- Appendix 4: Estimating need and demand
- Appendix 5: Protocol on working with homeless 16/17 year olds
- Appendix 6: Statutory legal duties
- Appendix 7: Stakeholder feedback
- Appendix 8: Plot diagrams of service provision
- Appendix 9: Nottinghamshire Accommodation and Support Pathway

- Appendix 10: NCC net requirements for supported housing
- Appendix 11: Strategy Action Plan

Equality Impact Assessment

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

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