

Meeting of the Children's Services Select Committee – (16th November 2023)

Report of the Care Experienced Young Adults Accommodation

Purpose of report

1. To update the Children's Services Select Committee on the delivery of accommodation to Care Experienced Young Adults as well as provide a response to the Children's Services Select Committee's recommendations to improve suitability of accommodation for this cohort of young people.

On the 13th March and 19th July 2023 Children's Services Select Committee recommended the following:

Councillor C Bayton requested that an item be included on care leavers accommodation and the issues that may be posed going forward.

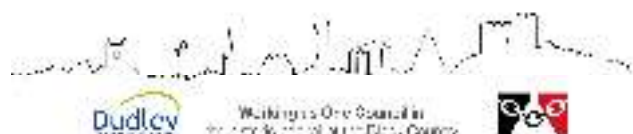
Recommendations

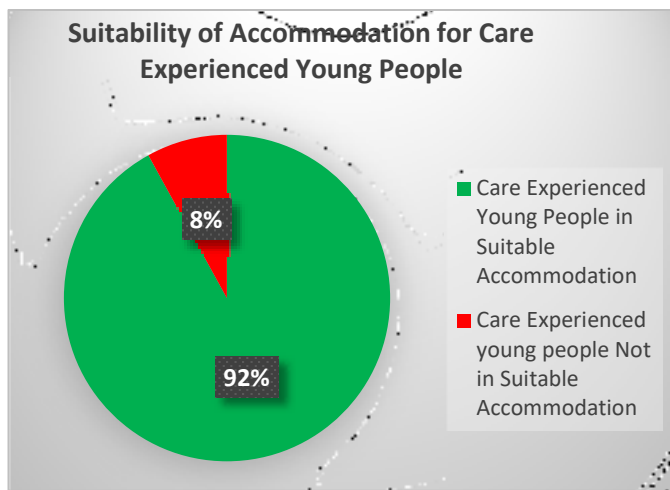
2. It is recommended that the report is noted by the Children's Services Select Committee.

Background

3. We are supporting 274 Care Experienced Young Adults in Dudley. 22 individuals are currently in accommodation identified as unsuitable, with 252 in suitable accommodation.

The following graph sets out the summary of our young people in suitable accommodation:





To note, custody is automatically considered to be unsuitable accommodation, and this is detailed in [e] below.

Care Experienced young adults living in Dudley have housing priority status. This status does not however, extend to Care Experienced Young Adults who are living outside of Dudley.

Not all Children in Care and Care Experienced young adults want to live independently;

- a) For those that are in foster placement, they are offered Staying Put and preparation for this commences at their 16th Birthday or earlier.
- b) Where a care experienced young adult is not ready to live independently at age 18, where appropriate, we consider Supported Accommodation while the young person is bidding for a property.

Care Experienced young adults can continue to live in Supported Accommodation or live with host families after the age of 18. Examples of Supported Accommodation providers are YMCA or CHADD. There are trained adults who offer practical or emotional support as well as equip the care experienced young adults with the skills they will need for adult life.

- c) Specialist accommodation: This accommodation is for young people who may have a disability or need support with mental health problems. We start working with Adult Mental Health Service or Preparation for Adulthood Service from age 16. At age 17.5, Adult Services complete a Care Act Assessment – where applicable and appropriate, the young person will move into an Adult Services commissioned placement with 24/7 wrap around support. This will continue to be reviewed to ensure suitability of accommodation.

- d) In terms of living independently, young people have the option of increasing their independence skills, initially from age 16 to 18. Where appropriate, they choose to live in Supported Accommodation. During this period, the young person will attend housing pre-tenancy workshop to equip them with life skills. At age 18, the young person will have the choice to move into their own property. 44% of our Care Experienced young adults live independently.
- e) Where a care experienced young person is in custody, they are allocated a YPA, who works collaboratively with Youth Justice / or Probation Service and Housing to ensure that suitable accommodation and support is offered when released from custody.

Support Provided to Care Experienced Young Adults

We work with Care Experienced young adults at their pace. Young people can have additional holistic multi-agency wraparound support, depending on assessed need. This is available to all Care Experienced young adults.

Preparation for Adulthood and Multi-Agency Arrangements.

Before a child/ young person is in care, leaves care, there are a number of steps that take place;

- Each young person has a transition planning meeting in preparation for adulthood. This includes establishing whether a young person can live independently when they turn 18 and what steps need to be taken to enable this to take place.

- Each young person's Transition Plan, which commences at age 16, is regularly reviewed at a Transitions Panel. This is held 6 weekly and chaired by the Head of Service Through Care and attended by;
 - A Housing officer whose focus is on Care Experienced young Adults.
 - The Virtual School,
 - Adult Mental Health,
 - Dudley Finance
 - Children's Commissioning officer.
 - Team Managers and Service Across the Service and the
 - Homelessness Prevention YPA/ Officer
 - The Alliance

Detailed performance monitoring provides assurance of the living arrangements for each relevant young person. Actions are in place to achieve suitable accommodation where possible and reduce the risk of homelessness.

There have been significant improvements in our performance; At the start of this reporting year (April 2023), 80% of our care experienced adults were in suitable accommodation and this has increased to 92% for September 2023.

Homelessness Prevention YPA role

- We have been successful in appointing an experienced Homelessness Prevention YPA (Jenna Wood) who supports care experienced young adults who are at risk of homelessness, as well as completing preventative work to reduce likelihood of risk.
- Jenna commenced work on 1st February 2023. This is a DfE funded role until March 2024. Confirmation of extension has not yet been given by DfE.
- Jenna Wood works collaboratively with the Housing department, liaising closely with the Homeless team, to secure suitable accommodation for care experienced young people.
- Jenna works closely with Community Housing Officers and Anti-Social Behaviour Teams to reduce factors that leads to homelessness, as well as prevent complaints from neighbours.
- Since February 2023, Jenna has worked with 33 young people and successfully reduced risk to homeless. All 33 have secured accommodation.

Next Steps

We continue to work across our Region with the other local authorities and Trusts. A Regional Care Experienced Board has been established and the focus of regional collaboration is to provide a consistent offer to Care Experienced young adults across the region. This includes a review of the housing offer across the Region.

We continue to focus on reducing the numbers of care experienced young adults who are at risk of Homelessness and those in unsuitable accommodation. This work is boosted by the presence of a Homelessness Prevention YPA and closer collaboration with all LA

departments and key partner agencies, including commissioned services, through Transitions Panel as well as targeted work with our young people.

We have recently drafted a joint New Housing Protocol for Care Experienced, with Housing and Commissioning colleagues. We are consulting with Care Experienced young adults during Care Leaver's week in October 2023. We are also consulting Supported Accommodation Providers, to seek their views.

We are currently working with Care Experienced young people to review the Dudley offer, with a plan to share the draft during care leaver's Week.

5. Consultation has taken place with the Housing Department, Commissioning Service, the Care Experienced Young Adults Service.

No conflict of interest has been declared.

This briefing is not seeking a decision from The Children's Select Committee. The report's purpose is to provide an update to the Committee.

Finance

6. There are no additional or changed financial implications in relation to this update.

Law

7. There are legislative implications which have been taken into account when writing this briefing. In November 2022, Ofsted produced New Standards and Inspection Framework for Supported Accommodation Providers. All providers of Supported Accommodation were required to register their provisions with Ofsted from 1st April to 27th October 2023.

Risk Management

8. Department for Education has provided a grant to mitigate the implications for the registration of Supported Accommodation

Equality Impact

9. The work currently being undertaken with Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, will further explore implications on Care Experienced as a protected characteristic in Dudley. This will include consultation with those in care and the young people who have left care.

Consultation with Care Experienced Young Adults regarding the offer as well as the draft Joint Housing Protocol will take place during the Care Leaver Week.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

10. There are no changes in relation to organisational development or HR implications in this updating briefing.

Commercial/Procurement

11. There is no impact to profit or of trade loss.

Environment/Climate Change

12. There are no additional impacts in relation to Climate Change or the environment with this briefing.

Council Priorities and Projects

13. This briefing supports the delivery of the role of Corporate Parent through members of the Select Committee.
It is in line with the Council Priorities for Dudley to be the safe and health borough, and the borough of opportunity.
14. This briefing does not identify any changed impact on Council or Borough activity. However, it does set out the housing needs of a particular group of residents as our care experienced young adults, and demonstrates the work in place to consistently meet those needs.



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