

REPORT FOR: Corporate Parenting Panel

Date of Meeting:	17 March 2015
Subject:	Housing for Care Leavers
Key Decision:	No
Responsible Officer:	Chris Spencer, Interim Corporate Director of Children & Families
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Simon Brown, Portfolio Holder for Children, Schools & Young People
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	No
Enclosures:	No

1.0 Summary and Recommendations

This report seeks to update the Corporate Parenting Panel of the housing assistance available for care leavers.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Panel note the report.

2.0 Introduction

Every year in March the planned distribution of permanent housing (i.e. quotas) for the following financial year is agreed with the Portfolio Holder for Housing.

2.1

These quotas are set following consideration of historic lettings data, future supply and demand data and assumptions. Care leavers are supported and prioritised under band B. for the leaving care quota. The number of care leavers anticipated to be ready for independent living, and therefore ready to leave care in the following financial year is also considered. The Allocations Scheme changed on 22nd October 2013 but Care Leavers continue to be able to access social housing through the quota.

2.2

In the year 2014/15 the quota has been set at 19. We are proposing maintaining this quota in 15-16, subject to Portfolio Holder for Housing's approval.

3.0 Issues

3.1

Both in 2012-13, and 2013-14 there were predictions that the number of care leavers would exceed the quota, but this did not happen. The quota in 14-15 of 19 has been fully filled.

3.2

There are now very serious pressures on social housing stock due to a significant rise in homelessness, pressure to downsize by tenants affected by welfare reform, and the need to move households temporarily to enable the estate regeneration programme to take place, that may ultimately increase supply. The huge increase in incentives for council tenants to buy their homes under the right to buy is also likely to affect supply.

3.3

We are able to maintain the quota as some new studio/1 bed Housing Association units will be available soon. Young People will need to accept Housing Association properties which have proved less popular in the past. Although the rents are higher, this is completely eligible for Housing Benefit for low income households. Because of the issues outlined above, it will not be possible to offer many council units to young people under this quota.

4. Proposed Recommendations

4.1

If the quota turns out to be insufficient we can bring forward our proposals to offer accommodation in shared housing. This would either be managed by the council or a Housing Association, leased from a private landlord. We have agreed with the Housing Benefit Service the rent levels that could be charged (and covered by HB). We could divert a Private Sector Leased

property to shared housing and manage it by our PSL team. Alternatively Genesis Housing are prepared to lease a property and manage it. We consider small shared housing units for 3 care leavers to be the most suitable option, but we can agree the exact configuration if shared housing is needed. We would also need to put in place a Service Level Agreement to deal with void periods, rent arrears and support for the residents. The Care Leaver and Housing Sub Group can finalise this. This option could be achieved within a few months of deciding it is needed, subject to agreement.

4.2

Housing Service and Children & Families Service will continue to work in partnership through this sub group and actively manage and respond to care leavers' housing needs.

5. Environmental Impact

There is no specific environmental impact from the issues outlined in this report.

6. Financial Implications

There is no financial implication as the quota is unchanged.

7. Risk Management Implications

There is no change from the report in October 2013.

(All related risks are recorded in the Children's Services risk register. There is a significant reputational risk from a poor inspection of social care, where support to children looked after and young people leaving care are crucial to mitigate risks and demonstrate developing practice and procedure support to this cohort.)

8. Equalities implications

There is no change from the report in October 2013

(CLA and care leavers are additionally vulnerable child in need. The 2009 statutory guidance "The Roles & Responsibilities of the Lead Member for Children's Services and the Director of Children's Services" highlights the need for Local Authorities to work corporately to improve the well-being of looked after children and young people leaving care, to make their needs a priority and seek the same outcomes that any reasonable caring parent would want for their own children. CLA consistently fare worse than their peers across a range of indicators including health, education, training, employment, homelessness and offending.)

9. Corporate Priorities

CLA and care leavers are additionally vulnerable by virtue of the experiences that led them into Local Authority care and in respect of the poor outcomes that many CLA and care leavers experience when compared to their peers, The Council's corporate priorities include providing care and protection to those who are most in need and this includes CLA and care leavers.

4.0 Statutory Officer Clearance

Name:..Jo Frost



on behalf of the
Chief Financial Officer

Date: 5th March 2015

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