

REPORT FOR: Corporate Parenting Panel

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| Date of Meeting: | 12 April 2016 |
| Subject: | Housing for Care Leavers - Update Report |
| Key Decision: | No |
| Responsible Officer: | Chris Spencer Corporate Director People |
| Portfolio Holder: | Councillor Simon Brown Portfolio Holder Children and Families |
| Exempt: | No |
| Wards affected: | Not applicable |
| Enclosures: | No |

1.0 Summary and Recommendations

- This report seeks to update the Corporate Parenting Panel of the challenges and housing assistance available for care leavers. Housing will continue to offer a quota of 19 to Young People Leaving Care; this will mainly be studio flats.
- This quota has to be reviewed annually
- The panel notes the updated review

Section 2.0

Introduction

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

Options Considered

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 A. 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.

2.2

The Allocations Scheme was reviewed and amended from 1st December 2015 but Care Leavers continue to be able to access social housing through the quota.

2.3

In the year 2015/16 the quota has been set at 19. We have been able to maintain this quota at 19 in 16-17, in spite of considerable housing pressures.

2.4

In previous years there were predictions that the number of care leavers would exceed the quota, but this did not happen. The quota in 15-16 of 19 has been fully filled, but not exceeded.

2.5

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. The huge increase in incentives for council tenants to buy their homes under the right to buy is also affecting supply.

2.6

There are further changes to Housing Benefit regulations this year that may affect Young People being assisted. For tenancies that commence after April 2016, in 2 years' time tenants in social housing will be capped at the same rent level as they would receive in the private rented sector. So for single people, rents would be capped at the shared room rate which is about £4 per week below a typical studio flat rent, and about £20 per week below a 1 bed flat rent. It is likely exemptions will be in place for Young People Leaving Care, but usually only up to age 21. So to avoid Young People running into rent arrears, generally only studio flats will be offered to single applicants under this quota.

2.7 Options to reduce the quota were considered, but not taken forward. Options to increase the quota were reviewed, but there are other competing demands and insufficient properties likely to be available for allocation in 16-17, so this was not possible.

Implications

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, for example, divert a Private Sector Leased property to shared housing and manage it by our PSL team. Alternatively Genesis Housing is 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.

Performance Issues

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.

Environmental Impact

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

Risk Management Implications

There is no change from the report in 2015.

(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.)

Financial Implications

There is no financial implication as the quota is unchanged.

Legal Implications

The power to offer a quota to Care Leavers is included in the Council's Housing Allocations Policy October 2013. Amended December 2015.

Equalities implications

There is no change from the report in 2015.

(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.)

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:

- Making a difference for the vulnerable

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

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| Name: Dave Roberts | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer |
| Date: 29 th March 2016 | | |

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| Ward Councillors notified: | NO, as it impacts on all Wards |
| EqIA carried out: | NO |
| EqIA cleared by: | There is none from the last report in 2015 |

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Papers – NONE

Contact:

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| Peter Tolley, Children & Families Service Tel: 0208 736 6943 Email : Peter.Tolley@harrow.gov.uk | Jon Dalton, Head of Housing Needs, Community Tel: 0208 416 8647 Email: Jon.Dalton@harrow.gov.uk |
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| Call-In Waived by the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee | NOT APPLICABLE |
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