

# **REPORT FOR: Corporate Parenting Panel**

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	14 June 2017
<b>Subject:</b>	Housing for Care leavers. Update Report.
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Chris Spencer Corporate Director, People Services
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Councillor Christine Robson, Children, Schools and Young People
<b>Exempt:</b>	No
<b>Wards affected:</b>	Not applicable
<b>Enclosures:</b>	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.

### **INFORMATION REPORT**

## **Section 2.0**

### **Introduction**

Every year 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 1<sup>st</sup> December 2015 but Care Leavers continue to be able to access social housing through the quota.

#### **2.3**

For this year 2017/18 the quota has been set at 19. We have been able to maintain this quota at 19 since 15-16, in spite of considerable extra 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 16-17 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 that will ultimately affect Young People being assisted. For tenancies that commenced after April 2016, HB for social housing will be capped at the same rent level as they would receive in the private rented sector. So for single people, rents will 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 17-18, 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 probably be managed by the council, leased from a private landlord. We have agreed with the Housing Benefit Service the rent levels that could be charged (and covered by HB) which would largely cover the cost of leasing property. 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 support for the residents, arrears and excessive void periods. The Care Leaver and Housing Sub Group can finalise this. This option could be implemented 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 2016.

(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 as amended December 2015.

## **Equalities implications**

There is no change from the report in 2016

(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

## **3.0 Statutory Officer Clearance**

Name: Jo Frost



on behalf of the  
Chief Financial Officer

Date: 18<sup>th</sup> May 2017

## **Contact Details and Background Papers**

Background Papers - NONE

**Contact:**

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