

Divisions Affected – N/A

**DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN,
EDUCATION AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES**

10 July 2024

**SUPPORTED ACCOMODATION SERVICE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
AGED 18-25 AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS**

Report by Director of Children's Services

RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet Member is **RECOMMENDED** to:

a) Agree the commissioning and procurement of the Supported Accommodation Service for Young People aged 18-25 at Risk of Homelessness service and to Award a Contract using a grant awarded by the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

b) Delegate authority to the Director for Children's Services, in consultation with the Head of Procurement and Contract Management, to award a Contract with a value of up to £400,000 per annum for the support element of a Supported Accommodation Service for Young People aged 18-25 at Risk of Homelessness service for a term of 3 years following a successful procurement process.

Executive Summary

1. In 2023 the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) invited Oxfordshire County Council and Oxford City Council to submit a joint bid for a supported accommodation service for young people aged 18-25 who have experienced multiple disadvantage and are at risk of homelessness. This is under their [Supported Housing Accommodation Programme](#) 18-25 year olds (SHAP). Oxfordshire County Council were the lead bidder and worked with a Registered Housing Provider who identified a suitable property to run the service from.
2. Oxfordshire County Council were awarded granted funding of approx. £1.2 m over 3 years to provide support for a 12 bedded service. However this funding was not drawn down as the housing provider was unable to obtain the necessary Planning Permission to convert the property to supported accommodation.

3. Oxfordshire County Council have now identified a different housing provider who has located a suitable 9 bedded property and a new proposal will be submitted to DLUHC for an alternative service to support a slightly smaller cohort of young people.
4. Should this proposal be accepted, Oxfordshire County Council will need to procure the support element of the service. The value of this is likely be approx. £1.2m for the duration of a 3 year contract starting from April 2025.
5. All housing management functions will be carried out by the housing provider who will apply for Enhanced Housing Benefit to cover the rent and supported housing management costs.
6. We are advised by colleagues in the City Council that Planning Permission for change of use from C4 to C2 is likely to be granted.

Context and Background:

7. The need for the service was jointly identified by Oxford City Housing Department and the Oxfordshire County Council Leaving Care Homeless Prevention team.
8. Current services do not meet the needs of young people with multiple needs which include a combination of:
 - (a) mental health needs (diagnosed or undiagnosed);
 - (b) neurodiversity
 - (c) learning disability
 - (d) refusal or eviction by current supported accommodation providers
 - (e) exploitation by criminal gangs
 - (f) drug and alcohol misuse
 - (g) aggression/challenging behaviour
 - (h) offending issues
 - (i) experience of abusive relationships
 - (j) experience of multiple care placements
 - (k) experience of multiple system failure.
9. Oxfordshire County Council worked with a Registered Housing Provider who identified a suitable property which could be reconfigured to provide 12 units of ensuite accommodation with additional office space, shared kitchens and lounges and 1:1 therapy rooms.
10. Funding of approximately £1.2m was granted by DLUHC to provide the revenue support element of the service for up to 3 years.
11. The Housing Provider was unable to gain the necessary Planning Permission to use the property for supported accommodation. Therefore Oxfordshire County Council is now working with another Registered Housing Provider who have sourced an alternative property to run the service from. The property has

9 ensuite bedrooms. Early indications from DLUHC are that this would be a suitable alternative to the 12 bedded property identified above.

12. The property will need a small level of refurbishment to update the décor and create an office and therapy room in the garden of the property. The Housing Provider is investigating a grant from Homes England to fund the refurbishment. It is not expected that any capital funding will be required from Oxfordshire County Council.
13. Oxfordshire County Council will submit a new proposal for support delivery for the 9 units of accommodation and will work in consultation with DLUHC and the Housing Provider.

The Service Model:

14. A nine bedded supported accommodation service for young people aged 18-25 located within Oxford City.
15. Residents will include care leavers (expected to be the majority) and young people presenting to Oxford City Housing Teams.
16. The expected length of stay in the service for each individual is flexible but anticipated to be up to two years.
17. There will be 14 hours of support per person per week and in addition dedicated mental health support and overnight support, the support costs that are funded by the SHAP grant will be provided by the Service Provider selected via the mini-competition process under the Start Well Supported Living Framework. Rental charges will be paid by housing benefit (subject to eligibility) to the Housing Provider under separate occupancy agreements between the occupant and the Housing Provider.
18. The expected outcomes for individuals in the service are:
 - new or renewed access and engagement with mental health services
 - an improvement in mental health and ability to manage own condition
 - empowerment to manage alcohol and substance misuse.
 - reduction in aggression/challenging behaviour
 - increased resilience to external risks such as exploitation or abuse
 - increased involvement with social and community networks
 - Increased independent living skills – cooking, budgeting, shopping for food, cleaning, tenancy management etc
 - Engagement in or progress towards Education, Employment or Training
 - The development of healthy relationships
 - Ability to move on to accommodation with lower levels of support

Procurement of Service

19. The support element of the service will be tendered as a mini-competition from the newly established Start Well Supported Living Framework.
20. The provision of property lies outside Contract Procurement regulations.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

21. The above proposal supports the Council's Corporate Plan and in particular points 2,3, and 7.
 - *Tackle inequalities in Oxfordshire* – young people to be supported in the above service are amongst the most disadvantaged in the county.
 - *Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents* – resource will be dedicated to addressing health issues of residents of the service, particularly mental health and alcohol and substance misuse.
 - *Create opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential.* Stable housing is fundamental to enabling young people achieve good life outcomes and this service will provide the support needed to help young people who have suffered multiple service failure address their needs and plan for their future.
22. In addition this service aligns with the CEF Commissioning Strategy (2023 update) Key Strategic Priorities
 - Needs led provision for care leavers over 18
 - Market Development Support – Focus on the predicted needs of care leavers post 18 and commission provision accordingly.

Financial Implications

23. For the first 3 years, this service will be fully funded by grants, and therefore the new commitments will not require any council funding in during this period.
24. The Housing Provider will apply to Homes England for a grant to make the property fit for purpose. There will be no call on the Council for capital expenditure.
25. The Housing Provider will be responsible for providing housing management services and for collecting the rent. Both of these will be covered by Enhanced Housing Benefit payable to each young person.
26. As there is no specifically commissioned current provision for the young people with the complex needs outlined above, many have been placed into expensive out of county spot placements, which can cost up to £7,000 per person per week.

27. Should there be no long-term funding beyond the initial 3 years from DLUCH the service would be placed on the Start Well Supported Living Service and be used by Children's Services to house and support care leavers on a pay per use basis. This is expected to be at a lower cost than the current spot purchasing method currently used.

Comments checked by: Thomas James, Head of Finance Business Partnering
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Legal Implications

28. The Council's powers and duties to engage in this activity are set out in
 - (a) The Housing Act 1996 and amended by The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which requires councils to prevent and relieve homelessness.
 - (b) The Children Act 1989 amended by The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 the purpose of which is to help young people who been looked after by a local authority move from care into living independently in as stable a fashion as possible.
29. The Start Well Supported Living Framework was competitively tendered as a light touch regime framework agreement under the Public Contract Regulations 2015. To ensure continued compliance with the Regulations any proposed block call-off contract for the support element of the services must be awarded under the mini-competition award process as set out under the Start Well Supported Living Framework and will be subject to its terms and conditions.

Comments checked by Jonathan Pool, Solicitor (Contracts),
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Staff Implications

30. The support service will be commissioned from a provider who is expected to provide all necessary staffing as part of the contract.
31. The Housing Provider will be responsible for all training and supervision of housing provider staff providing housing management functions under the occupancy agreements.
32. The work to resubmit the revenue funding bid and if successful commission the service and contract monitor it will carry no additional staffing implications.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

33. The support service was planned according to a detailed gap analysis of services for young people who have complex needs and who have experienced multiple service exclusions.
34. This new service will cater to their individual needs through tailored support plans which will take into account each young person's risk factors such as
 - Mental health
 - Neurodiversity
 - Learning Difficulty
 - Refusal or eviction by current supported accommodation providers
 - Exploitation
 - Drug and alcohol misuse.
 - Aggression/challenging behaviour
 - Antisocial behaviour
 - Offending issues
 - Experience of abusive relationships
 - Experience of multiple care placements
 - Experience of multiple system failure
35. The service will
 - cater to each individual's cultural and religious beliefs
 - support each young person to access training, learning, voluntary and employment opportunities as appropriate as a step towards becoming economically active
 - be procured in an open and transparent manner through our Start Well Supported Living Framework which requires all providers to have an Equalities Policy in keeping with the Equalities Act 2010 and to certify that they have no industrial or tribunal cases brought against them regarding unlawful discrimination within the last 3 years.
 - Be regularly monitored on equality items by the Council's Quality and Improvement Team.

Sustainability Implications

36. The Start Well Supported Living Framework requires providers to self-certify that their organisation had no prior convictions of breaching environmental legislation, or had any notice served upon it within the last 3 years by any environmental regulator or authority.
37. Support work for the service will mostly be carried out at one site and recruitment is likely to attract local workforce so will limit the amount of required travel.
38. The property used will have a high energy performance rating and residents will be supported to develop efficient energy use habits.

Risk Management

39. Care leavers are highly over represented in mental health and drug and alcohol services as well as the homeless and prison populations. Those with the most complex needs are most at risk. This service seeks to mitigate the risk factors which these young people face and to support them to overcome their challenges.
40. Assuming Planning Permission is granted and that the updated revenue bid is accepted by DLUHC, please see a table of risk and mitigations relating to the specific service below

Risk	Impact	Probability	Mitigation	Risk Owner
No suitable provider takes part in the mini competition to provide the service.	High	Low	Extensive market engagement took place during the service design stage and a soft market testing exercise was carried out by Procurement in April 2024 which yielded 19 companies interested in providing the support. This list includes the housing provider.	Commissioning Team
Successful support provider is unable to recruit full compliment of staff	Med	Low	Recruitment experience and procedures will be tested during procurement process The service will accept young people in a phased manner	Commissioning Team Quality and Improvement Team

			which can be adjusted according to staffing levels	
Voids in service due to lack of referrals	Low	Low	The need for the service is based on a gap analysis conducted jointly the City Council and the County Leaving Care Team. This indicated a need for 15 units of accommodation but a suitable building was not available to provide this number.	Commissioning Team Housing Provider Support Provider
Conflicting needs of young people make matching of residents difficult in a shared property raising a risk of voids	Med	Low	Accommodation of 9 ensuite rooms allows young people space to be alone when necessary. High levels of staff specifically trained in supporting young people with complex needs plus dedicated onsite mental health support will mean young people are supported to use the shared areas.	Support Provider Commissioning and Quality and Improvement Teams
Lack of move on opportunities mean that service	Med	Med	Intensive support will enable young people to move into other commissioned	Support Provider Commissioning Team

