

## Equality Impact Assessment

Reference: EQIA277304878

Submitted: 27 November 2020 11:54 AM

### Executive summary

**Title of policy or decision:** FP/842/10/20 Semi-Independent Accommodation and Support: Decision to Recommission a Framework from October 2021

**Describe the main aims, objectives and purpose of the policy (or decision):**

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 imposes accommodation duties on local authorities to support certain categories of looked-after children and care leavers aged 16-17. Semi Independent Accommodation (SIA) is one such accommodation option.

The procurement relates to the provision of accommodation and support placements in the following circumstances:

a) Eligible and relevant young people and young people in care aged 16 and 17

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 imposes accommodation duties on local authorities to support certain categories of looked-after children and care leavers aged 16-17. The Council's Looked After Children Sufficiency Strategy 2018-22 identifies Semi-Independent Accommodation (SIA) as one of several accommodation options designed to support some of the most vulnerable children and young people leaving care. These placements form an important part of the system in meeting the needs of older children who are ready for increased independence.

b) Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

The Council has a statutory duty under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 to assess and provide accommodation and support to any child who requires it, irrespective of their immigration status, nationality or documentation, until they reach the age of 18.

c) Families and young people aged 18+ with no recourse to public funds (NRPF)

Under the Hillingdon Judgement, the Council is obliged to adhere to the Local Authority Guidance LAC (2003) (13) on accommodating children in need and their families under section 20, that is young people 18+ and families with No Recourse to Public Funds.

The Cabinet report that this EQIA relates to is proposing that the Council launches a competitive procurement for a Framework contract for the provision of Semi-Independent Accommodation (SIA) in four Lots for the following cohorts:

(a) Lot A - Semi-independent accommodation and support for eligible and relevant young people and young people in care aged 16 and 17.

(b) Lot B - Semi-independent accommodation and support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) aged 16 and 17, including initial age assessment where required.

(c) Lot C - Accommodation for families and young people 18+ with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) where the Council has a duty to provide them with accommodation.

(d) Lot D - Semi-independent accommodation and support for eligible and relevant young people and young people in care aged 16 and 17, who have complex needs that require extended, intensive support and supervision.

**What outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve?:** Help people get the best start and age well

**Which strategic priorities does this support? - Help people get the best start and age well:** Help keep

vulnerable children safer and enable them to fulfil their potential

**Is this a new policy (or decision) or a change to an existing policy, practice or project?:** a change to an existing policy, practice or project

**Please provide a link to the document / website / resource to which this EqlA relates:** This will be a Cabinet decision, going to Cabinet in January 2020. Paper can be uploaded once it is finalised.

**Please upload any documents which relate to this EqlA, for example decision documents:** This will be a Cabinet decision, going to Cabinet in January 2020. Paper can be uploaded once it is finalised.

## Assessing the equality impact

**Use this section to record how you have assessed any potential impact on the communities likely to be affected by the policy (or decision):**

Data analysis undertaken as part of recommissioning identified the following key points:

- The monthly volumes of all YP living in SIA over the last 4 years has increased by 76% from 80 YP in April 2017 to 141 in July 2020.
- Approximately 50% of young people living in SIA are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)
- There has consistently been a much larger volume and therefore proportion of male young persons living in SIA compared to females. With females accounting for only 24% in 2017/2018, 2018/2019 and 2020, and 27% in 2019/2020. The proportion of boys is over represented as UASC are predominantly male.
- In line with the Department for Education figures the reason for male proportion to be much higher is that between 87% and 96% of the UASC population is male, thus skewing the numbers.
- Less than 1% of children in SIA are recorded as having a disability. This is due to almost all children with disabilities in care are in foster care or residential placements.
- Over the last four years there has been a slight increase of those in SIA with Mixed Ethnic backgrounds, from 7 (4%), 13 (5%), 19 (8%), to 10 (6%).
- For the white cohort, whilst volumes have been changing dramatically since April 2017, proportion has remained fairly constant, between 43% and 45%.
- The high percentage of non-white British children in SIA reflects the fact that around 50% of the SIA population are UASC

ECC talked to Care Leavers and USAC Young People, aged 16 -18, including those who have recently moved into SIA and those are looking to move on, aged 18.

This consultation was carried out during 2020 and identified the following key points:

- Young People in SIA accommodation all felt that their actual accommodation was 'Good' or 'Very Good'.
- All Young People advised that they generally feel well supported by the Support Staff within the service.
- All Young People feel they are encouraged and supported to develop skills to help them live independently, including support around finances and budgeting, cooking, household skills and how to access Employment and Education.
- 82% of Young People felt they were given lots of information on how to access their local community, e.g. transport, health services and activities. 90% would like to receive information about their local community via social media, text or email and 10% would like this shared with them in person by the support staff.
- 67% felt that they only had a partial involvement in where they were placed, or no influence over the decision. There was a 50/50 split of Young People who advised they had a choice on where they were going to live. However, 67% advised they were comfortable with the accommodation once they were placed.
- All Young People advised they feel safe within their accommodation, however, CCTV, support staff being on site and knowing there is someone to contact if a problem is important to them.
- 83% of Young People responded that they do not need any additional support around their mental health needs or were already receiving the support they need.
- Young People expressed they find the freedom the service brings as 'good'
- The main issues Young People find not so good are early curfews and poor internet connectivity
- When looking to move on from the service, most young people want to live independently in their own accommodation, but most felt that continued support would be beneficial as they transition e.g. floating support.
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The feedback from young people confirmed that the service has been working well generally, and areas for improvement will be built into the new service specification.

### **Does or will the policy or decision affect:**

**Service users:** Yes

**Employees:** No

**The wider community or groups of people, particularly where there are areas of known inequalities:** No

**Which geographical areas of Essex does or will the policy or decision affect?:** All Essex

**Will the policy or decision influence how organisations operate?:** Yes

**Will the policy or decision involve substantial changes in resources?:** No

**Is this policy or decision associated with any of the Council's other policies?:** Yes

**Is the new or revised policy linked to a digital service (website, system or application)?:** No

## **Description of impact**

**Description of Impact. If there is an impact on a specific protected group tick box, otherwise leave blank. You will be given the opportunity to rate identified impacts as positive, negative or neutral on the next page:** Age, Disability - learning disability, Disability - mental health issues, Disability - physical impairment, Disability - sensory impairment, Gender / sex, Gender reassignment, Pregnancy / maternity, Race, Religion / belief, Sexual orientation

**I confirm that I have considered the potential impact on all of the protected characteristics:** I confirm that I have considered the potential impact on all of the protected characteristics

**Describe any actions that have already been taken to mitigate negative impacts on any of the protected characteristics:** No negative impacts have been identified

## **Age**

**Nature of impact:** Positive

**Please provide more details about the nature of impact:** This is a service specifically for young people in care aged 16 and 17, and is one of a number of placement options open to them, the others include foster care, residential care and supported lodgings. The availability of SIA increases the likelihood of a suitable placement being able to be found for a young person.

**Extent of impact:** Medium

**Please provide more details about the extent of impact:** The service is an age-specific option for 16-17 year olds.

## **Disability - learning disability**

**Nature of impact:** Neutral

**Please provide more details about the nature of impact:** Very small numbers of young people in SIA are identified as having a disability. Data from social care indicates that the vast majority of children in care with disabilities have their needs met in foster- or residential care placements.

**Extent of impact:** Low

**Please provide more details about the extent of impact:** See above.

## Disability - mental health issues

**Nature of impact:** Positive

**Please provide more details about the nature of impact:** Feedback from young people indicates that most did not need any additional support around their mental health needs or were already receiving the support they need.

In addition, all children in care with identified mental health issues have access to a Mental Health Co-ordinator within social care.

**Extent of impact:** Medium

**Please provide more details about the extent of impact:** Young people with mental health issues are supported to access specialist support where required.

## Disability - physical impairment

**Nature of impact:** Neutral

**Please provide more details about the nature of impact:** Very small numbers of young people in SIA are identified as having a disability. Data from social care indicates that the vast majority of children in care with disabilities have their needs met in foster- or residential care placements.

**Extent of impact:** Low

**Please provide more details about the extent of impact:** See above

## Disability - sensory impairment

**Nature of impact:** Neutral

**Please provide more details about the nature of impact:** Very small numbers of young people in SIA are identified as having a disability. Data from social care indicates that the vast majority of children in care with disabilities have their needs met in foster- or residential care placements.

**Extent of impact:** Low

**Please provide more details about the extent of impact:** See above

## Gender / sex

**Nature of impact:** Neutral

**Please provide more details about the nature of impact:** There is a gender imbalance in SIA currently, which is due to almost all UASCs being male. However all young people that require an SIA placement are able to access one regardless of gender, and matching is undertaken on a case by case basis to ensure that each young person is in a household that appropriate for them, be it single-sex or mixed.

**Extent of impact:** Low

**Please provide more details about the extent of impact:** See above.

## Gender reassignment

**Nature of impact:** Neutral

**Please provide more details about the nature of impact:** The service will continue to support all children and young people of any gender identification.

**Extent of impact:** The service will continue to support all children and young people of any gender identification.

**Please provide more details about the extent of impact:** See above.

## Pregnancy / maternity

**Nature of impact:** Neutral

**Please provide more details about the nature of impact:** If a young person becomes pregnant while in an SIA placement, there are processes in place to assess the suitability of the placement and usually arrange a move to a parent + child placement in order to meet the family's needs.

**Extent of impact:** Low

**Please provide more details about the extent of impact:** See above.

## Race

**Nature of impact:** Positive

**Please provide more details about the nature of impact:** Nearly 50% of young people in SIA are BAME. SIA provides placements for a significant proportion of UASC entering care in Essex. Providers are skilled and experienced at meeting the cultural needs of diverse groups of young people and in the use of translators and interpreters where this is required. Feedback from UASC young people has been very positive and they feel supported to access education, learn English and learn the cultural customs of this country.

**Extent of impact:** High

**Please provide more details about the extent of impact:** The ability of providers to meet the needs of BAME young people is significant, and has a significant impact on nearly half of the young people accessing the service.

## Religion / belief

**Nature of impact:** Positive

**Please provide more details about the nature of impact:** Many of the UASC have religious beliefs that are important for them, these are taken into account when matching so that for example a Mosque is easily within reach of the young person's placement. Providers are experienced in working with a diverse range of backgrounds, cultures and religions and supporting young people to be able to practice their faith in the way that they wish.

**Extent of impact:** Medium

**Please provide more details about the extent of impact:** Religious / cultural needs are a significant part of the placement matching process.

## Sexual orientation

**Nature of impact:** Neutral

**Please provide more details about the nature of impact:** The service supports all young people that are placed in SIA. Where sexual orientation is disclosed, any impacts or wishes of the young person are explored and taken into account when identifying a suitable placement.

**Extent of impact:** Low

**Please provide more details about the extent of impact:** See above.

## **Action plan to address and monitor adverse impacts**

**Does your EqIA indicate that the policy or decision would have a medium or high adverse impact on one or more equality groups?:** No

## **Details of person completing the form**

**I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance:** I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance

**Date EqIA completed:** 27/11/2020

**Name of person completing the EqIA:** Henrietta Barkham

**Email address of person completing the EqIA:** Henrietta.Barkham@essex.gov.uk

**Your function:** Children, Families and Education

**Your service area:** Commissioning

**Your team:** Children & Families and All Age Mental Health Commissioning

**Are you submitting this EqIA on behalf of another function, service area or team?:** No

**Email address of Head of Service:** clare.burrell@essex.gov.uk