

Equality Impact Assessment - head of service review

Reference: EQIA161941861

Submitted: 19 December 2019 11:12 AM

Executive summary

Title of policy or decision: Housing Related Support: Post 16 Services – Extension to current contract.

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

The Housing Related Support - Post 16 (also known as Essex Young People's Partnership – EYPP) service is currently commissioned to ensure that the most appropriate support services are available for Young People in need of support around housing needs.

The key groups of young people supported are:

- o Aged 16 and 17 years old at risk of homelessness.
- o Additional young people aged 18 to 21 years old at risk of homelessness and are assessed as having specific vulnerabilities.
- o Care Leavers aged 18 to 21
- o Young parents aged 18 to 21 with additional vulnerabilities

These cohorts of young people are often the very vulnerable and have experienced poor parenting and/or may have been in local authority care for some of their lives or been in a situation where they find it difficult to remain within their own family home. Young parents often may have additional support needs of their own can also struggle to effectively parent their own children and as a result may be known to social care.

The primary legislation and guidance which drives the commissioning of HRS Post 16 Accommodation and the support elements provided by ECC are

- o The Children Act 1989, as amended
- o Housing Act 1996 parts 6 and 7
- o Southwark Judgment 2009
- o The Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010 and the Children Act 1989 statutory guidance Volume 3: planning transitions to adulthood for care leavers revised January 2015
- o Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- o MHC&LG Homelessness Code of Guidance for local housing authorities
- o MHC&LG and DfE joint statutory guidance to Children's Services and Local Housing Authorities on "Prevention of homelessness and provision of accommodation for 16 and 17 year old young people who may be homeless and/or require accommodation

The service includes the following main components:

- Information, Advice and Guidance
- Prevention and Intervening Early
- Assessment and Support Planning
- Risk Assessment and ongoing Management
- Integrated Working/Partnership Working
- Wraparound Support
- Support/Interventions
- Access to and maintenance of ETE/peer and mentoring support/volunteering

- Move-on
- Emergency Placements

Access to the service is through a single point of access and this is managed by four quadrant Gateway Managers within ECC. The Gateway Managers work closely with Operational Teams, providers and district housing partners to take a strategic partnership approach to improving the accommodation support system for young people. They also work closely with the leaving and after care teams to ensure referrals are made and there is a smooth transition for people leaving care. Gateway Managers also facilitate access to emergency accommodation and prevent delays in young people being placed in appropriate accommodation and linked with relevant support. Referrals are prioritised using the Supported Housing Needs Assessment

The current contract in place is for the period 1st June 2017 until the 31st May 2020 and the service is delivered by NACRO, with one sub-contractor, Peabody, (formerly Family Mosaic) and the contract value is £2.5m per annum. The service currently supports up to 330 young people at any one time across the County.

A contract review carried out in late 2018 made several key findings including a reduction in the overall number of young people accessing the service and an increased complexity of need and level of risk in young people and mental health needs. This impacts on young people's ability to keep safe and move to independence.

A 10-month extension period to the current contract is being sought to allow Commissioners to achieve the following:

- An improved geographical spread and tenure mix of accommodation to meet changing demand
- Explore opportunities to improve 'move on' from the service through collaborative arrangements with the 12 Local Housing Authorities in Essex
- Learn from a range of pilot and innovation schemes
- To collaboratively design a service that is fit to meet the challenging and changing needs of young people in the future.

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, Enable more vulnerable adults to live independent of social care, Improve the health of people in Essex

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

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): Use this section to record how you have assessed any potential impact on equality groups. What is known about the population likely to be affected which will support your understanding of the impact of the policy (or decision)? Consider any consultation / data as supporting evidence (eg service uptake/usage, customer satisfaction surveys, staffing data, performance data, research information). An opportunity to explain impacts on specific protected groups is provided later on this form

What does the information tell you about those groups identified?

A review of the HRS Service that concluded in November 18 identified the following volumes of young people accessing the service against those that were accessing the service at the beginning of the current contract in 2016:

16/17 year olds at risk of homelessness: Numbers at start of contract 112, Predicted changes 177, actual service users at 31/05/2018: 114

Care Leavers: numbers at start of contract 72, Predicted changes 97, actual service users at 31/05/2018: 138

18-21 year olds with additional vulnerabilities: numbers at start of contract 119, Predicted changes 39, actual service users at 31/05/2018: 32

Vulnerable young parents up to 21:: Numbers at the start of the contract: 50, predicted changes: 40, actual

service users at 31/05/2018: 39

TOTAL actual service users at 31/05/2018: 323

The review also evidenced:

- The number of young people accessing the service were lower than initially projected.
- There are more Care Leavers accessing HRS than had been predicted but this can be largely put down to the fact the specialist social care team for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) is based in Harlow and as a result the majority of UASC are placed there and therefore a higher demand for HRS accommodation.
- Local Housing Authorities' interpretation of their duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) have varied
- Referral pathways for young people aged 16-17 can also be varied and there is a reluctance from young people to have a Social Care assessment carried out.
- Some reluctance on the part of providers to move the young person on where there is no one waiting for the bed-space, as the resulting void has a financial impact on the service;
- There are issues around the appropriate 'move on' from the service for some young people – these include: lack of suitable accommodation available in some districts, difficulties in matching young people with other young people in shared accommodation and if a young person is in work or education they may find it unaffordable to move, unless they are able to find accommodation at social housing rental rates.

During May & June 2019, the Commissioning Team and Insight & Analysis Teams jointly engaged with 30 young people from across all the cohorts supported, some of whom are now living independently. This was carried out through a series of face to face focus groups and 1:1 interviews across all geographical areas of the County. The key themes that emerged from the engagement were that young people need to feel safe & secure, need support around maintaining financial stability and improved life skills, need to receive support at the right time and that move on from the service can be challenging.

Wider engagement has also taken place with current providers, district councils and wider stakeholders regarding the re-commissioning of the service from April 2021.

Further engagement is planned with young people and stakeholders including those in care who may access the service in the future to inform future service design.

All of the findings from the review and engagement work are assisting to drive the re-commissioning process that is already underway, to ensure that these are considered within a new service from April 2021.

Does or will the policy or decision affect:

Service users: Yes

Employees: Yes

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?: 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, Pregnancy / maternity

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

Age

Nature of impact: Positive

Please provide more details about the nature of impact: This service is specific to those aged 16-21 and provides accommodation for those cohorts that meet the criteria. Between July 19 and September 19, 68% of the referrals received were young people aged 16 & 17.

Extent of impact: Medium

Please provide more details about the extent of impact: This service is specific to those aged 16-21 and provides accommodation for those cohorts that meet the criteria. Between July 19 and September 19, 68% of the referrals received were young people aged 16 & 17. Therefore those young people who are at risk of homelessness are provided with suitable accommodation. Transition pathways are in place to adult services and work is planned to improve these pathways as part of recommissioning the new service from April 2021.

Pregnancy / maternity

Nature of impact: Positive

Please provide more details about the nature of impact: Young parents, or young women who are pregnant, are a specific cohort of young people who are supported by the service and therefore have access to appropriate accommodation and support around their parenting needs.

Extent of impact: Medium

Please provide more details about the extent of impact: Some young parents, or young women who are pregnant, due to issues or concerns, may be subject to a child in need or child protection plan and social care support is provided alongside the HRS service to provide a cohesive support package.

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: 19/12/2019

Name of person completing the EqIA: Neil Songer

Email address of person completing the EqIA: Neil.Songer@essex.gov.uk

Your function: Children & Families

Your service area: Children & Families

Your team: Children, Families and Mental Health Commissioning Team

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