

Decision maker:	Cabinet Member, Health & Adult Wellbeing
Decision date:	Thursday, 26 November 2020
Title of report:	Accommodation Based Support Service for Young People
Report by:	Senior Commissioning Officer, Communities

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To approve a three month direct award of a contract for accommodation based support service for young people for the period to 31st January 2021. The contract is due to end on 31st October 2020 and an unavoidable delay has resulted a request for a direct award to extend to 31st January 2021. Once approved a waiver will be requested.

It was proposed that procurement would commence for a new housing related support service for young people in June 2020, with mobilisation aligning with the completion of building works and the end of the existing supported accommodation for young people contract on 31st October 2020, it was planned that the new service would commence on 1 November 2020.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- (a) A contract be awarded to Citizen Young People for the accommodation based support service for young people for a period of 3 months to 31st January 2021 with a maximum cost of £40k.**

Alternative options

1. The option to not extend the service by three months. This is not recommended as this will leave Herefordshire with no specialist supported accommodation service for young people for three months. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on the social and private rented sectors. The unprecedented circumstances greatly reduced the existing provider's ability to successfully support move on in a timely and appropriate manner to prevent a negative impact on the young people they are accommodating and supporting. The pandemic has adversely impacted young people in their ability to access training, education and employment all necessary to underpin successful move on to independent living.
2. The option to continue with the existing foyer based model has been explored and exhausted and the matter resolved in previous decisions. This option is not advisable or practicable as the service model no longer meets the changing and diverse needs of Herefordshire's vulnerable young people.

Key considerations

3. Following consultation and extensive data collection a new service is being commissioned that will extend Herefordshire's offer of accommodation and support to young people. The new service will consist of one and two bedroomed self-contained supported accommodation units with offers of support extended to those living in the community through outreach support and mediation.
4. The development of the new service has been delayed due to the necessity to change the grant condition of the award from Homes England to the housing developer to include the provision of supported housing. The grant was initially awarded for the provision of affordable general needs housing and did not include the use for supported accommodation. Additionally the delivery of the service has been obstructed by the unprecedented challenges COVID-19 placed on registered providers and the construction industry. The pandemic greatly reduced the ability for people to move home impacting on the ability of the current provider to successfully facilitate the natural move on of young people from the supported accommodation. The completion date of the premises became uncertain and no reassurances could be given as to the length of delay.
5. The extension will allow the existing service to close in a planned way with no negative impact on the young people and ensure that the new accommodation is completed, on time, to a high standard.
6. The current contract was awarded to Supported Housing for Young People Project (SHYPP) (Citizen Young People) for the period ending 1 November 2020 through a key decision made on 22nd March 2019. The contract was essential in order to ensure continuity of service for vulnerable young people and provide for the preparation of an open procurement process in 2020.
7. The current service has operated for a substantial period of time and continues to offer 30 units of supported accommodation in Herefordshire for single young people who require support to gain the skills required to successfully reside and thrive independently in the community.
8. The council and the existing service provider have jointly reviewed the service over the last few years to ensure that the right service is being offered to the right young people, with varying degrees of success. This included reviewing and revising the referral and

Further information on the subject of this report is available from

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admission practices and the assessment and management of risk. The provider is still facing challenges around void management with rooms being unoccupied across the three foyers, the market town foyers being the biggest challenge. Where local providers cannot manage the risks of supporting vulnerable young people the current alternative option is to accommodate with an out of county provider who can meet the needs of the young people.

9. On average Herefordshire has had 117 entrants to the looked after system each year since 2015. 18% of new entrants were aged 16/17. The majority of young people's needs include remaining locally in Herefordshire, to maintain their family and community connections. However, due to service capacity pressures in sourcing local accommodation and support, this is not always possible. The current provision only accommodates single young people with low to moderate needs and does not meet the needs of all the young people resulting in out of county placements. There were 39 active out of county placements for children aged 16-17 and care leavers on 9th October 2020, these being provided at significant cost to this council.
10. The new service will operate from premises owned by a local registered housing provider and the specialist support provider will be announced shortly. The service will enable more young people to achieve positive outcomes and offer a flexible approach to providing support services including supported accommodation and support to those in the community through mediation and outreach support.
11. The new service has been developed in response to local need and consultation with young people and analysis of this data has informed the creation of the new service. The new service is very different to the current single person accommodation offer. A flexible accommodation approach is required to not exclude young people with different circumstances and needs, including young people who are pregnant or have dependants, or complex needs. The service will offer outreach support to those in the community with low support needs or in housing crisis, the data has shown that the numbers requiring light touch support are increasing. The mediation service will support foster placements or family breakdowns with an offer of supported emergency accommodation for the young person, to give everyone the time and opportunity to work together to ensure the right outcomes for the young person and their family.
12. The option to proceed without a three month extension would be detrimental in launching the new service. The tender process was delayed due to uncertainty around the completion of the building works and whilst a competitive procurement process is near concluding the provider of the new support service will require time to mobilise. Continuing to allow a three month mobilisation period gives the new service every opportunity to successfully launch and show real commitment to invest in high quality new services for vulnerable young people.
13. The service is being procured via a competitive open tender process, with bidders detailing how they propose to deliver the services, including mobilisation, resourcing and quality assurances. The timetable for procurement includes:

Activity	Revised timetable
Notice of intention to award and standstill period	16 th October 2020

Confirmation of contract award and record of officer decision	w/c 26 th October 2020
Service mobilisation commence	End October 2020
Identify nominated tenants and individuals for floating and mediation services	December – January 20/21
Service commences	1 st February 2021

Community impact

14. The council's County Plan 2020/24 has set out the key ambitions for Herefordshire over the next 4 years, and how these will be achieved. These ambitions are: Environment – protect and enhance our environment and keep Herefordshire a great place to live. Community – strengthen communities to ensure that everyone lives well and safely together. Economy – support an economy which builds on the county's strengths and resources. The approach of the service will be to encourage the wellbeing and mental health of residents, and a strong ethos on community engagement activities.
15. The County Plan is committed to implementing a care leaver's covenant that demonstrates the council's commitment to supporting children who are moving on from care and to develop the market for care leaver accommodation and support through the commissioning of housing related support services that meet local needs. The services will meet this commitment, with opportunities for young people to access local supported accommodation and receive universal and prevention offers through floating support/outreach and mediation.
16. The joint strategic needs assessment, Understanding Herefordshire includes data on people who are homeless and threatened with homelessness and the incidence of substance misuse and mental health need. This service will contribute to the reduction in the need for temporary accommodation under statutory duties placed on local authorities under the Children and Social Work Act 2017, Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
17. Herefordshire's Corporate Parenting Strategy 2017/20 sets out how the council as corporate parent will provide every opportunity for looked after children and care leavers to succeed. Priority 8 focuses on the challenges and opportunities in enabling young people to live happy, healthy and financially secure lives when they leave care. The challenges include a shortage of affordable housing and difficulty in engaging with young people who are involved in challenging behaviours. The provision of this service will support addressing these challenging through appropriate tailored support.
18. The Children and Young Peoples Plan 2019/23 identified that targeted supported is required to make a difference, particularly to our most vulnerable, to enable them to thrive and make a successful transition to adulthood.
19. The Council is updating its Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy to take account of the changes in government legislation and policy, including the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Rough Sleeper Strategy published in August 2018. Action 7

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of Objective 2 of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2016/20 aims for collaborative work with the council's Children's Wellbeing Directorate and social housing providers to identify how the housing and support needs of homeless, and potentially homeless, 16-17 years old and young people leaving care can be most effectively met. Herefordshire's aims and objects of irradiating rough sleeping and preventing future homelessness, has resulted in the development of project BRAVE, as a robust exit and recovery plan for this cohort. The project commits to working with individuals to develop a 'personal plan' that offers supports to meet their individual needs to include accommodation, health, employment, substance use and reconnection with family and friends.

Environmental Impact

This decision seeks to deliver this councils environmental policy and aligns to the following success measures in the County Plan.

- Improve energy efficiency of homes and build standards for new housing
 - Increase the number of short distance trips being done by sustainable modes of travel – walking, cycling, public transport
20. Herefordshire Council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.
21. The environmental impact of this proposal has been considered through the service specification and includes appropriate requirements on the contractor/delivery partner to minimise waste, reduce energy and carbon emissions and to consider opportunities to enhance biodiversity. This will be managed and reported through the ongoing contract management.

Equality duty

22. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:
- A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -
- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
23. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. Our providers will be made aware of their contractual requirements in regards to equality legislation.

24. The Equality Act 2010 established a positive obligation on local authorities to promote equality and to reduce discrimination in relation to any of the nine 'protected characteristics' (age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; marriage and civil partnership; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation). In particular, the council must have 'due regard' to the public sector equality duty when taking any decisions on service changes.
25. Establishing these services will coincide with the end of a contract, subject to the three month contract extension, providing supported housing to young people in Herefordshire. A formal service development plan was established in February 2019, to facilitate joint work with the current provider. The proposed new services will provide a more wide ranging and versatile response to the needs of young people and therefore will improve services for people sharing protected characteristics.
26. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) can be found at Appendix 2 in the decision report dated 22 March 2019. Overall, this decision is not expected to have a detrimental effect on any groups of people with protected characteristics. The creation of this new service for vulnerable care leavers is expected to have a positive impact on young people and those with disability, particularly with mental health needs.

Resource implications

27. This decision is to extend the existing contract for three months at a maximum cost of £40k. There are no additional costs as the new service will commence seamlessly as the existing contract draws to a close.

Legal implications

28. The existing contract with the provider will have to be varied to enable this extension. This should not pose any legal difficulties.

Risk management

29. If the recommendation is not approved then there will be a gap of three months where there will be no provision of specialist supported accommodation for young people in Herefordshire. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic will have a negative impact on the lives of the young people accommodated and supported by the current provider due to the unprecedented restrictions placed on the social and private housing sectors. The uncertainty of the impact of the pandemic on the building industry to commit to a completion date delayed the procurement process.
30. The direct award will allow the existing service to terminate in a planned way with no negative impact on the young people and ensure that the new accommodation is completed, on time, to a high standard.

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the building industry. Completion of building works required on the premises for the new service was uncertain and delayed due to unprecedented circumstances.	The existing contract is extended for a further 3 months from 1 st November 2020 to 1 st February 2021. This will allow the building work on the new premises to be completed to a high standard and allow a 3 month mobilisation period.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the social and private housing sectors, restricting movement within the industry, with landlords focusing on core services and pausing the letting and sale of properties, movement was greatly restricted and reduced.

Allow the extension of the existing contract for 3 months to enable the existing provider to reclaim the time to work with the young people residing in their premises to successfully support move on into suitable accommodation as their agreed pathway plans.

Any risks have been appropriately identified and recorded within the Adults and Wellbeing or service risk register, where they will be escalated if required. If the recommendations are delayed or not approved then the termination of a service may be detrimental to the young people in the service, the pandemic has disproportionately impacted on young people's education, training and employment opportunities and their ability to move on in a planned way to suitable independent accommodation.

Consultees

31. Young people have been involved in evaluating two of the questions in the tender. Previous consultation was addressed in the key decision dated 22nd March 2019.

Appendices

None

Background papers

None identified

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.