

Meeting:	Cabinet
Meeting date:	27 July 2017
Title of report:	Young people's accommodation strategy
Report by:	Cabinet member, health and wellbeing

Classification

Open

Key decision

This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising one or more wards in the county.

Notice has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in Connection with Key Decisions) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

Wards affected

Countywide

Purpose

To approve a new accommodation strategy for vulnerable young people in Herefordshire.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- (a) the accommodation strategy for vulnerable young people in Herefordshire at appendix 1 be approved.**

Alternative options

1. The option to continue to improve accommodation for young people without a formal strategy. This option is not recommended because it would establish no clear objectives or principles or way of measuring success and demonstrating commitment. Nor would it promote different ways of working across housing and children's services which are the hallmark of the proposed strategy. The strategy is also required in order to create a model for delivering savings and monitoring the avoidance of specialist placements for young people.
2. The option to include management of homelessness among young people generally within the strategy. This is not recommended because there are specific duties and other factors relevant to homelessness which can be addressed best through implementation of the homelessness prevention strategy.

Reasons for recommendations

3. The council has developed a newly collaborative and strategic approach to meeting the accommodation needs of vulnerable young people. This involves new housing development, allied to commissioning of care and support and offers the opportunity to improve outcomes for young people and generate some savings. It is necessary to formalise this approach in a new strategy to set appropriate objectives and target outcomes and promote new ways of working to achieve strategic goals.

Key considerations

4. The proposed accommodation strategy seeks to address the accommodation needs of two main groups of young people aged 16 to 25 as they move into adulthood.
 - Disabled young people with significant needs transitioning
 - Looked after children (LAC) aged 16 to 17 and care leavers

Both groups involve young people whose social care needs are identified as children and which are likely to continue into adulthood. Both groups are protected at least until the age of 25, from recent welfare changes affecting housing benefit. The council has a range of statutory duties to each group including in practice a responsibility to provide accommodation. The LAC and care leavers cohorts include unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC), whose accommodation needs are complicated further by multiple permutations of legal status. For all of these young people the focus of the strategy is creating and sustaining sufficient targeted and supported housing.

The strategy also encompasses a very different group; that of younger disabled children and their families. Here, the requirement is accessible family homes which is delivered through a combination of existing accessible housing stock and bespoke solutions for individual families.

5. The strategy does not address directly homelessness among young people. This is to be the focus of a new action plan under the Homelessness Prevention Strategy for Herefordshire. The young people most at risk of homelessness are those who are not disabled, nor looked after nor care leavers, so lack the specific protection available to those groups. Linking the homelessness action plan and this accommodation strategy will be newly redesigned housing and accommodation pathways for;

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
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- Transitioning disabled young people
- LAC and care leavers
- Young people aged 16 to 25 threatened with homelessness

These pathways and the new homelessness action plan will be brought forward for approval towards the end of 2017.

6. There is currently in Herefordshire a limited supply of targeted or supported housing for LAC and care leavers, so that there is an over reliance on specialist support placements, often out of area and attempts to negotiate social housing through the lettings policies of housing providers. This approach is fraught with difficulty and some avoidable cost. In response to new case law, a protocol between housing agencies and children and young people's services was developed in 2010. However, this did not address the supply of sufficient accommodation for care leavers, nor a sustainable matching of housing with appropriate support. The council has been working across directorates and with housing providers to develop the approach now set out in the new accommodation strategy.

Targeted housing is that which is reserved for specific groups of people and to which the council nominates individuals and is built to a "general needs" specification. Supported housing additionally provides for care or support to be provided on site, along with intensive housing management. This may involve different build requirements.

7. Where disabled young people are transitioning to adulthood and their social care needs are assessed, there will be consideration of their potential need for accommodation. Options have often been limited at this stage and young adults tend either to move directly into residential care or be expected to remain in the family home. This can result in poor outcomes for young people and avoidable cost to Adult Social Care. For some disabled people, supported housing is more cost effective than residential care. However not all young adults can expect to live independently of their families as soon as they leave full time education.
8. For both main groups of vulnerable young people, the population can be identified with some clarity and their need for accommodation quantified and prioritised and is summarised below;

	Care Leavers	UASC	Disabled People
Immediate Need (6 months)	11	8	3
Specific Need (12 months)	9	9	3
Future need or post education	9	3	10
Housing needs currently met	89	6	69
Review required (data quality issues)	24	0	13
Total	142	26	98

The above table provides a snapshot of needs at one time For LAC, other than UASC and younger disabled children and their families, the numbers requiring housing solutions are small and further work is being undertaken to analyse their needs more precisely. Accommodation is found currently on a bespoke, case-by-case basis. In developing understanding of projected need the council will continue to research practice elsewhere and identified councils with which to undertake comparative analysis.

9. The accommodation strategy sets out eight key principles to be followed and eight strategic objectives against which achievement can be monitored. It is intended to be a “living document” and describes the significant progress made so far in relation to many of the objectives. The strategy adopts a three phase approach, building on the knowledge of population need and recognising the opportunity to make better use of existing housing stock and services and the need to build more accommodation.

Phase 1 in 2017 seeks to utilise fully any vacancies in existing supported housing services including reconfiguring the use of SHYPP accommodation.

Phase 2 during 2017/18 brings into use accommodation already in the development pipeline and new acquisition of property, with or without the assistance of the council.

Phase 3 involves new housing development from 2019 to 2021, utilising opportunities through planning gain and through negotiation with developing providers or strategic use of council land assets.

10. A strategic approach to sourcing accommodation for LAC, care leavers and UASC also requires a reconsideration of the way support to those groups is commissioned. Care leaver support is often purchased either in the form of out of area placements or on a spot basis where the support provider also sources accommodation. One effect of the new approach will be to limit or phase out those forms of purchasing to some degree and so options for commissioning support will be examined during the remainder of 2017. New arrangements will ensure that support is available flexibly to meet the actual needs of young people and is cost effective. Support in shared accommodation for UASC presents some additional challenges, because their specific needs are seldom known in advance and because their legal rights and resources available can vary widely once they are over 18.
11. Provision of support for disabled young people in supported accommodation also requires continual review. This will ensure that people are matched to the right housing and location and the package of support provided is both economic and supports the person to live as independently as possible. The right package of supported housing will start from the strengths of the individual, their carers and local community and apply the most appropriate hourly tariff and sharing of support with others. This work is also being undertaken in relation to the parallel development of an accommodation strategy for people with learning disability or acquired brain injury.
12. The council will draw upon several strategic partnerships and developments in order to achieve the new housebuilding required to implement the accommodation strategy. The agreement with Herefordshire Housing Limited (HHL) to allow it to devote all capital receipts from disposal of some properties into new housing for vulnerable people will contribute 20 or more units. The council's new strategic development partnership will also generate opportunities for small scale developments targeted to vulnerable young people as part of wider schemes. There are also opportunities for the council to collaborate with its strategic housing partners to build new supported housing for young people.

Community impact

13. The council's corporate plan includes a commitment to enabling people to live safe, healthy and independent lives. Care leavers, UASC and disabled young people are amongst the most vulnerable in society to unsafe living arrangements which endanger their health and economic future. The strategy will enable significant advances in supporting young people to make a positive start in life, helping them to live independently in the future.
14. Herefordshire's health and wellbeing strategy identified mental health and children as key priorities and both those areas of need will be addressed directly by the proposed new accommodation strategy. Some care leavers, UASC and disabled young people have mental health needs and these are often a barrier to safe and appropriate accommodation. The housing needs of UASC and LAC, along with some younger disabled children and their families will be met by the strategy.

Equality duty

15. The council is committed to equality and diversity using the Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. All the user groups addressed by the accommodation strategy share protected characteristics as young people but also in some cases as disabled people or in other groups. The accommodation strategy will generally bring significant benefit to young people with protected characteristics by giving them access to targeted or supported housing appropriate to their needs. This is likely to improve greatly the outcomes they face as they transition into adulthood. There are not anticipated to be any negative consequences for people arising from the strategy although an equality impact assessment is being prepared to record its implications in more detail.

Financial implications

16. Whilst there may be no specific revenue cost implications for the council arising necessarily from the proposed accommodation strategy, there are risks with potential economic consequences. These are set out from paragraph 21 of this report.. It is anticipated that overall a greater reliance on supported and targeted housing for vulnerable young adults will generate savings in social care spending and this has been incorporated to some degree in MTFS targets. These targets are subject to review as directorates consider progress in utilising current supported housing provision and re-visit comparative cost modelling for supported housing and residential placements. Where the council reserves nomination rights for accommodation commissioned, it may under-write the cost of vacancies or "voids". This cost would be expected to represent a small fraction of the value of savings achieved overall.
17. The strategy sets out an outline comparative cost model for supported housing for disabled young adults. This suggests that by 2021, new accommodation could facilitate cost avoidance of up to £325k annually. However, this would be dependent on factors including the needs of individuals, the provision of hourly rates and shared hours within support packages. The provision of supported accommodation does not always generate savings and can lead to escalated costs particularly for individuals with very complex needs. Such individuals are not the focus of this strategy.
18. Cost modelling for supporting care leavers and LAC is the subject of detailed analysis currently and this will inform a review of MTFS targets and future commissioning of support. Savings are anticipated given the high cost of specialist placements for these

groups of young people. The shared housing with support proposed in the strategy for UASC has been costed in detail and in general can be afforded within the funding provided for this group by government. However, the funding and cost picture is very complicated in some cases of former UASC care leavers.

19. There will generally be no direct capital cost to the council in developing the housing proposed in the strategy. However many units of accommodation will be created as a result of the council's agreement to forego its entitlement to capital income when HHL disposes of properties. The council retains the option to provide modest capital contributions to strategic acquisition of accommodation, within existing budgets. Proposals may be brought forward in due course to make strategic and modest use of the council's land assets to develop supported housing as part of the strategy. Any such proposals will be subject to the relevant governance at the time they are brought forward and informed by a full business case.

Legal implications

20. The council has a number of statutory duties under various pieces of legislation as outlined in Part B paragraph 9 of the accommodation strategy. Failure to comply with our statutory duties could result in a challenge by way of judicial review. There is no legal requirement on the council to adopt a formal strategy but by doing so provides clear objectives in accordance with the council's corporate plan.

Risk management

21. In implementing the accommodation strategy the following risks may arise;

- Changes in funding of supported housing may lead to the council having funding insufficient to meet all future supported housing need. In mitigation, the council is establishing a project to ensure adequate reflection of current enhanced housing benefit spending and informed projection of future need, whilst reassuring markets.
- The future availability of current supported housing units for vulnerable young people is subject to the business decisions of providers. The units themselves can be more difficult to replace than the support required. This risk will be mitigated by careful negotiation with current and alternative providers about options.
- There are barriers to full utilisation of supported housing for disabled people and continuing deferral will reduce potential savings achievable and discourage the supported housing market. A revised approach to reviewing and facilitating the needs of people is now being implemented

22. If the recommendations in this report were not to be approved, significant risks would include;

- A continuing and increasing reliance on specialist placements for care leavers, often out of area, with consequentially poor outcomes for individuals. This would also prevent the council from emeting MTFs targets.
- The resort to use of residential care for many transitioning young disabled people, resulting in poorer outcomes for individuals and a failure to achieve savings or cost avoidance.
- A lack of development of diverse and appropriate accommodation for vulnerable young people.
- An increase in homelessness among LAC, care leavers and disabled young people.

Consultees

23. The council undertook consultation with care leavers and LAC aged 16 to 25 around their housing and accommodation needs in April 2017. 14 young people completed the comprehensive survey. They contributed many views and suggestions which are directly quoted and incorporated in the draft accommodation strategy. Accommodation and housing for young people have been encompassed in recent engagement with and by herefordshire's Corporate Parenting Panel. Its comments and suggestions related in particular to pathway planning with young people, the availability of sufficient accommodation of good quality and the problems of seeking to manage the housing needs of care leavers through homelessness applications. These have been incorporated into the strategy and in particular its principles.
24. Council members have been consulted through their political groups on the proposal to adopt an accommodation strategy for vulnerable young people. No comments were received.
25. The council has consulted learning disabled people during 2016/17 around their aspirations and requirements in relation to accommodation and housing. Meetings and a survey encompassed a small number of young adults and their views have been incorporated into the development of the draft strategy. They reflect upon the location of housing, the need for different levels of support and the importance of being able to build and maintain friendship and social networks.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Draft accommodation strategy for vulnerable young people

Background papers

- None identified.