What needs do young people have in terms of accommodation?

Young people are entitled to help from social services if they are a “child in need”. This includes people under 18 who: have a disability; are a care leaver; have come to the UK from abroad and are not here with a parent or guardian; have nowhere to live. The help can include housing and financial support.

The Government recognises that young people leaving care face significant challenges as they mature without the same levels of support that most experience in a family environment:

“Around 10,000 young people leave care in England each year aged between 16-18 years old. They leave home at a younger age and have more abrupt transitions to adulthood than their peers. Unlike their peers who normally remain in the family home, care leavers will often be living independently at age 18.”

One of the biggest challenges they might face is in relation to accommodation. This strategy has already highlighted the limitations in the housing market (see Mental Health resource analysis). Young people leaving care face the same difficulties in finding suitable, affordable accommodation and might also suffer discrimination from landlords who can choose who they let to.

Some young people have complex needs including mental health issues or substance misuse, and therefore need additional support alongside their accommodation. It is this group that is most significant in relation to this strategy.

How much housing with support is needed for young people?

Figure 4

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1 HMG Care Leaver Strategy - A cross-departmental strategy for young people leaving care October 2013
There are approximately 230 children and young people in care at any one time in North Somerset. Approximately 141 of these are classed as care leavers, of whom approximately 25 will be seeking accommodation at any given time.

A snapshot of the number of young people in bed and breakfast or temporary accommodation is 6 as at May 2017 with several more very close to needing it. There are on average 10 young people in this situation at any one time.

The demand is likely to increase as duties to care leavers are being extended under the Social Work Act 2017 from age 21-age25 so our cohort will increase significantly, possibly by as many as 100.

How is accommodation with support for young people funded?

Funding for accommodation for this group is predominantly through housing benefit, those requiring support can currently get a higher level to access supported housing. Changes in the benefits system will mean that the additional “top up” for support will be administered by local authorities in future.

Unfortunately there is a “catch 22” in the current structure of supported housing in that it costs more than other rented accommodation which is a disincentive to work as it is hard for this group to earn enough to pay the higher rent. The provisions are time limited but if there is not suitable accommodation to move on to the additional cost can result in debts building up which further hamper any move.

What can be learned from good practice in this area?

The Housing First model described in the Mental Health chapter of this strategy is also recognised as an ideal model for care leavers. Rather than enter accommodation where the support is fixed and becomes a burden to them financially the model offers accommodation as a separate provision which remains whether

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2 Good practice: briefing Housing first Bringing permanent solutions to homeless people with complex needs Shelter 2008
support is provided or not allowing a flexible model where the support can reduce as required.

The Asdan Programme\(^3\) offers a wide choice of activity-based programmes that can be used in mainstream and alternative educational settings with learners working at a range of levels. The focus is on skills development, with courses available for young people and adults aged 7-19+ over a range of timescales, from 10 to 180 hours. North Somerset has been a key partner in developing a national publication which gives care leavers an ASDAN accreditation in Independent Living Skills. This has been piloted locally and is fit for purpose. It is designed so carers/family can support the young person in completing the programme. It is a relatively new resource for North Somerset and requires some ‘rolling out’ to carers and social workers.

A full time Housing Officer has been funded over several years to work with care leavers and their carers to plan with them their options. This is a highly valued, specialist role and is instrumental in assisting care leavers, their carers, social workers and Personal Advisers with planning and access to housing in local areas.

The Money House is a 5 day training programme that all care leavers and those in supported housing have to do in Greenwich in order to get additional banding/points. The take up and completion rate is 98% and the long term outcomes measured on tenancy sustainment and arrears are a marked improvement on those without the advantage of this approach.

“The Money House was designed to meet the challenge of engaging young adults in financial literacy in a real-life environment. Training was delivered in a real flat, in one and five day courses, with the longer version aimed at those leaving care or supported housing. What made The Money House different? The training used everyday scenarios to show attendees what is involved in managing a home. We used electricity meters to talk about energy consumption, practised understanding real bills and decoding things like APR and AER, and developed shopping lists and practised recipes for food budgeting. By working in such an open and relaxed environment, as far from ‘school learning’ as possible, we were able to adapt and tailor the course to each individual’s learning style. All our trainers were experienced in working with young adults, and they brought creativity and enthusiasm to the sessions. Once a week, The Money House attendees were visited by a professional, such as a credit union representative or an employment adviser. These visitors were all approachable ‘experts’, able to share key knowledge and tips with the young people. Their presence helped build participants’ confidence for dealing with such professionals in the future. The opportunity to achieve an AQA unit award through completion of the five day course was particularly valuable to those young people not in education, employment or training.”\(^4\)

The recent analysis of care leavers in North Somerset by St Basils recommends this approach as likely to be beneficial here.

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3 http://www.asdan.org.uk/
What is are strategic ambitions of North Somerset regarding housing with support for young people?

This chapter has considered how housing with support can be beneficial for young people, how much is required in North Somerset and what is needed to make it come about. It has also considered the possibility of providing housing with support for young people alongside people with different needs. The following table summarises the key issues and the strategic ambitions to resolve them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Ambition for future</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>There is an urgent need to improve the supported accommodation options available for young people leaving care by recommissioning provision to better meet needs.</td>
<td>Review of provision by external consultant: Anna Whalen, Youth Homelessness Advisor, St Basils. 23/1/2017</td>
<td>In future there will be a choice of accommodation for young people leaving care and clear routes to access what is needed.</td>
<td>Review existing provision and recommission in order to devise clear and accessible routes for young people to access accommodation. Reduce accommodation with low level support and increase housing with high level support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>There is need for more provision of accommodation with support for CYP with complex needs on leaving care.</td>
<td>Review of provision as above</td>
<td>There will be an increase in the provision of supported living for care leavers.</td>
<td>Remodel existing provision to better fit need including medium and high levels of support. The needs of young people leaving care will be considered alongside other groups to maximise development opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>There is a need for emergency accommodation for CYP which is not B&amp;B or a hotel.</td>
<td>Review of provision as above</td>
<td>Emergency accommodation will be available for young people.</td>
<td>Remodel existing provision to better fit need. The needs of young people leaving care will be considered alongside other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improvements required to existing provision.</td>
<td>Review of provision as above 23/1/2017</td>
<td>There will be improvements in provision for young people leaving care.</td>
<td>The provision for young people will be scrutinised and improvement measures put in place.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Changes to housing benefit for under 35’s will lead to an increase in demand for shared properties.</td>
<td>TBC</td>
<td>There will be sufficient shared accommodation in North Somerset that is suitable for younger people.</td>
<td>Work with provider partners to increase number and range of appropriate accommodation in North Somerset and ensure plans supported by all parties at every stage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

