

# Children's Services Committee

<b>Report title:</b>	<b>Semi-independent Accommodation &amp; Support for 16–17-year-old Looked After Children</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>22 May 2018</b>
<b>Responsible Chief Officer:</b>	<b>Sara Tough Executive Director of Children's Services</b>
<b>Strategic impact</b>  This report is aligned to Norfolk Futures Strategy 2018 – 2021 and the “Safer Children & Resilient Families” work stream’s focus on placement choice and a commitment to secure better semi-independence for care leavers.	

## Executive summary

At Policy & Resources Committee on 6 February 2017 there was agreement to allocate £5m capital funding to support the purchasing and renovation of properties that would enable Children's Services to improve the sufficiency of accommodation for 16 and 17-year olds, through having greater control over the quality of semi-independent accommodation and ensuring that young people within semi-independent accommodation are appropriately supported.

A small project team has been established, led by the Children's Services Service Development Manager (Placements & Sufficiency), working closely with the Corporate Property Team, and overseen by a recently established project group chaired by an Assistant Director in Children's Services. The team are focused on bringing up to 11 additional semi-independent accommodation units to operational delivery.

Three existing NCC properties have been identified for renovation. To date, one property has been identified for capital purchase with a potential second property being considered. There is a need to identify a further six properties suitable for the provision of semi-independent accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds. Each of the units will have 24/7 support available and will be closely monitored to ensure that young people are safe and achieving their potential.

The aim is that five of eleven additional semi-independent units will be operational by the end of December 2018, with the remaining six units coming on-stream during 2019.

### Recommendations:

- **Agree that the project team progress with using the allocated capital budget to secure properties in geographical locations across the county, through a mix of renovation of existing NCC properties (currently three) and the purchase of further properties (currently planned to be eight).**

## 1. Proposal

- 1.1 This activity is being delivered as part of our Norfolk Futures Strategy 2018–2021 and specifically the “Safer Children & Resilient Families” work stream. The project is focused on improving the sufficiency of placement choice and securing better semi-independent accommodation for care leavers aged 16 and 17.

- 1.2 At the Policy & Resources Committee on 6 February 2017 the decision was made to provide £5m for the development of a number of additional accommodation units to be used as both residential provision and self-contained move-on beds for young people leaving care.
- 1.3 A small project team has been established, led by the Children's Services Service Development Manager (Placements & Sufficiency), working closely with the Corporate Property Team, and overseen by a recently established project group chaired by an Assistant Director in Children's Services. The team are focused on bringing 11 additional semi-independent accommodation units to operational delivery by the end of 2019 through:
- Securing appropriate properties, either through use of existing NCC estate or via capital purchase on the open market.
  - Commissioning the adaptation of these properties for use as semi-independent accommodation for 16/17 year olds.
  - Identifying and agreeing operational arrangements to operate each new unit.
  - Developing our use of block contracting with existing semi-independent providers to secure better value for money and improve access to high quality accommodation.
  - Improving arrangements to monitor the quality of semi-independent accommodation.
- 1.4 It is proposed that the eleven additional units are located in communities across the county on the basis on current and projected need for the provision of semi-independent accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds. It is essential that all properties being purchased or adapted to provide semi-independent accommodation are selected on the basis that they offer safe accommodation for vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds, and in locations that enable them to move to independence.

- 1.5 The proposed arrangements of the 11 additional units:

No of Units	No of beds	No of young people placed	Expected to be operational from:
3	4 per unit	12	Winter 2018 Summer 2019 Summer 2019
4	2 per unit	8	Winter 2018 Winter 2018 Spring 2019
4	1 per unit	4	Summer 2019 Spring 2019 Winter 2018
<b>TOTAL 11</b>		<b>24</b>	

- 1.6 Wherever possible the intention is to make use of existing NCC owned estate. However a review of Norfolk County Council owned properties by the Corporate Property Team has, to date, only identified three properties, in appropriate locations, that are suitable for use by 16 and 17 year olds. As the NCC estate changes there may be further opportunities for such units.

- 1.7 Three existing NCC properties have been identified for renovation. To date, one property has been identified for capital purchase with a potential second property also under consideration.
- 1.8 Proceeding with these five properties should mean that five of eleven additional semi-independent units will be operational by the end of December 2018, with the remaining six units coming on-stream during 2019. The timescales for individual sites to become operational will be confirmed as the project progresses.
- 1.9 Recognising the complex needs and vulnerability of the young people concerned, each unit will have 24/7 support available and will be closely monitored to ensure young people are safe and achieving their potential.
- 1.10 The intention is to register a number of the units with Ofsted due to the complexity of care needs for this cohort of young people.
- 1.11 The development of these units is complemented by Norfolk's participation in the Department for Education 'Inside Out' Innovation Project (worth £3.1m) alongside Essex and Hertfordshire councils, allowing further investigation and testing of support models for young people aged 15-17 and involved with criminal activity, and our involvement in the Department for Education 'Staying Close-Staying Connected' project (worth £1.3m) being led by Break targeted at 18–24 year olds, helping to ensure that there are smooth transitions into adulthood.
- 1.12 The additional eleven units should be seen in the context of a range of existing semi-independent accommodation provision across the county. These existing units, together with our partnership arrangements with current providers are enabling Children's Services to focus on areas where there is a clear lack of sufficiency for this type of accommodation.

## **2. Financial Implications**

- 2.1 The costs associated with the subsequent purchase/adaptation of the eleven properties will be funded from the £5M capital funding agreed at Policy & Resources Committee.
- 2.2 Cllr Kiddie (as Chair of B&P) will approve any acquisitions (which will also be reported to B&P) providing Member Scrutiny and oversight. The Head of Corporate Property will also seek an independent assessment from NPS (an external third party) as to the value being paid for any property, alongside confirming any known conversion costs.
- 2.3 The cost of young people being placed in semi-independent accommodation is met through the budgets held within localities. The budget in 2018/19 for young people in semi-independent accommodation is £4,940,520. This includes all the budgets for LAC & Leaving Care Accommodation & Support, University Placements and Staying Put in both spot and block contract provision.
- 2.4 Work is underway to identify the most cost-effective way to deliver the eleven units in relation to revenue costs. The average current weekly cost per young person for 16 -17 year olds including those in supported lodgings and supported accommodation is £1,193. The average cost for accommodation and support for

young people with high level challenging behaviours in agency residential is £3,453 per week.

- 2.5 We have seen an increase in the demand for solo placements or 1-1 support, due to the complexity of needs of the young person and their challenging behaviour. This has seen an escalation in costs.
- 2.6 The aim of the project is to provide high quality local semi-independent accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds, enabling us to reduce our average weekly placement cost through less reliance on agency and residential placements.

### **3. Issues & risks**

- If we do not invest in increasing the sufficiency of semi-independent accommodation, our costs will continue to escalate as the number of young people are projected to increase.
- Cannot access accommodation and have to resort to either B&B or hotel.
- Without improved support, young people will not have the skills to prepare them for independence.
- Young people will be placed out of county which has negative impact on them, family and staff, due to time required for travel which is an added expense.
- Failure to achieve planning permission or get the properties registered will prolong the date for opening new units.

### **Officer Contact**

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper please get in touch with:

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