

**CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

**25 April 2016**

**ACCOMMODATION FOR CARE LEAVERS**

**Report of Head of Looked After Children**

**1. Purpose of the Report**

To inform members on the development of accommodation options for care leavers within the city of Sunderland.

**2. Description of Decision (Recommendations)**

Members to agree with the proposals below to improve the accommodation offer for care leavers.

- The Change Council in conjunction with care leavers to agree a charter for suitable accommodation within the City of Sunderland
- The charter to be written into all commissioning contracts for the provision of care leavers accommodation
- Care leavers to meet with providers to outline the minimum agreed requirement for suitable accommodation
- Young Inspectors to undertake inspections of the care leavers accommodation to ensure that it meets the minimum requirements

**3. Introduction/Background**

During the Ofsted inspection in May 2015, concerns were raised relating to the suitability of accommodation within the city for care leavers. This followed Ofsted's visit to one of our providers (Centrepont) and subsequent discussions with some of our care leavers who raised their concerns relating to their accommodation options.

The provision of suitable accommodation is one of the areas covered within the Councils Improvement Plan.

**4. Current Position**

We have a number of leaving care accommodation providers within the city, the main ones being Centrepont, YMCA and our own 'in house' accommodation which include Chester road and Burlington crescent.

I commissioned a group of care leavers who are representatives of the Change Council to visit these providers, to identify how 'suitable' the accommodation offered by each provider was.

Some of the Accommodation visited by the young people in their view needs some significant changes, in order to reach what they believe to be a suitable level. Indeed, the young people picked up a number of themes that need some urgent action.

The accommodation option preferred by our young people was the Chester Road provision, which is provided by the Council. The young People felt it was a good location, felt welcoming, nice rooms and had a flexible approach to the way young people are cared for.

By contrast, the other Council run provision Burlington Crescent did not go down as well. The young people didn't feel it was as welcoming, did not like the rooms (particularly the pull down beds), did not like the area it was located within and were concerned that it smelt of cannabis.

The Centrepoint provision was equally felt to be unwelcoming, though the outside of the building looked nice, the interior of the building was not so good. Rooms were quite small and there was damage to rooms and corridors (this was an area of concern raised within the Ofsted inspection).

The view of the YMCA was somewhat mixed. Young people liked the rooms, but did not like the corridors. Liked the staff, but felt the youth worker did not engage with them, or indeed any other young person present. The young people did like the range of courses on offer to the young people resident within the building.

We are in the process of opening a new council run leaving care provision (Elwin), which will provide 4 rooms for care leavers. I anticipate the lessons learned from the Change Council visits, will be incorporated within this provision.

## **5. Reasons for the Decision**

Providing a charter on suitable accommodation for care leavers will give providers a clear steer on what we need and enable Sunderland City Council to meet its requirements for suitable accommodation as outlined within the accommodation strategy and required as part of the Councils Improvement Plan.

The undertaking of inspections by care leavers will enable the Council to ensure that the providers continue to meet our expectations.

## **6. List of Appendices**

- **Review Assessment- Leaving Care Accommodation**

## Review Assessment- Leaving Care Accommodation

YP Names	Support Worker	Reviewed service/organisation
Kieran Boyce Gabby Turner	Jane Wheeler	Leaving Care Accommodation
Start Date	End Date	Report Date
12 <sup>th</sup> January 2016	12 <sup>th</sup> January 2016	13 <sup>th</sup> January 2016
Name and Contact Details of the person who requested/commissioned the review:		
Martin Birch, Head of LAC		

Sections	Chester Road	Burlington Close	YMCA Toward Road	Centrepont Dundas St
<b>Is the accommodation Accessible? (location, transport, good amenities)</b>	In a good location, bus services are on the door step, seems safe, CCTV, close to the hospital, Sunderland college and the town.	This may be hard for some people to find. It doesn't seem to be in a very good area.	Close to the town, bus station and shops.	Seems to be out of the way as off the main road, close to bus links.
<b>Is the accommodation welcoming? (staff, cleanliness, comfort, decoration)</b>	The staff members were really friendly and approachable instantly we felt safe and comfortable on arrival. Corridors were a bit cold but all the rooms were lovely and warm. The rooms were really nice and young people could decorate them with their own pictures etc. Each young person has their own bathroom. I would find it easy to settle into.	Upon arrival and being greeted by the staff member I instantly felt uncomfortable and intimidated. It didn't feel very welcoming and corridors stunk. All rooms had fold down beds which I don't think is homely.	In the main reception the smell of weed took my breath away and made me feel sick. We were showed the rooms and they all had double beds and en-suite facilities. The rooms did seem okay but I wouldn't feel comfortable as there were a lot of service users outside and the staff on reception was not really friendly. You can't paint your own rooms.	The accommodation was not welcoming. The staff were pleasant on reception. When we were being showed to a room, a lot of residents came out to have a look and made me feel uncomfortable. The corridors had lots of holes in which didn't make me feel safe. The rooms had bathrooms but they were small and not very comfortable.

<p><b>Is the accommodation safe and secure? (safe, staff cover, fire exits, safeguarding)</b></p>	<p>One thing we picked up on from the beginning was that from the outside the building looked like a normal house. There is a smoking area out the back which stops young people gathering out the front. Staff have curfews in place to ensure young people are home, you also need to let them know if you are staying out which you can do 3 times a week. Staff are fully trained and talked openly to us</p>	<p>I personally wouldn't feel safe here, there is 24 hour staff available but I got the feeling that they might not be as supportive as others. The man who was there really made me feel uncomfortable and not someone I can approach if I was worried. I would feel quite isolated there.</p>	<p>Each corridor has its own fob to stop people going on to each floors, however young people had held the doors open with the fire extinguishers. There is staff available and the two women who showed us around were lovely but don't think this would be for vulnerable young people. We went down to the youth zone and there was a youth worker just lying about and really didn't look like he wanted to be there.</p>	<p>There is 24 hour staff cover but I felt that it was isolated. Young people shouting from the windows and generally made me feel uncomfortable. I am sure they are trained but again not for vulnerable young people.</p>
<p><b>How are young people involved in the development/ delivery of the accommodation?</b></p>	<p>Hold meetings for everyone to discuss issues or if a big change is to happen. Young people requested to have WIFI in and this is now happening.</p>	<p>Yes they have regular get together.</p>	<p>Youth group sessions where young people can address issues</p>	<p>Monthly meetings over a take away.</p>
<p><b>General impressions</b></p>	<p>I thought Chester road was really nice and welcoming, good location, flexible, lovely rooms.</p>	<p>Not as well presented, didn't like area but if I knew it more it may feel safer? Pull down bed ☹️ and smell.</p>	<p>Nice rooms but disgusting corridors, lovely staff and great courses with lots of opportunities. The youth worker didn't interact.</p>	<p>Looks like a nice building, rooms are quite small and looks like a rough council estate, door handles were damaged and walls dented.</p>