



Northumberland

County Council

CABINET

11th October 2022

Supported Accommodation and Lodgings for Care Leavers and Young Homeless – Permission to Tender

Report of: The Service Director of Children's Social Care & Joint Interim Director of Children's Services, Graham Reiter

Report of Cabinet Member: Councillor Guy Renner Thompson, Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to:

Seek permission from Cabinet to go to the market to commission a range of services to provide supported accommodation and lodgings for Northumberland care leavers and young homeless which will assist the Council in meeting its statutory duties.

The intention is to create a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) which will allow the Council to contract with a variety of pre-qualified suppliers, supporting access to a range of placements across the County for eligible young people. Unlike a framework arrangement, a DPS allows suppliers to join at pre-agreed points of time, encouraging competition and making it easier for local suppliers to access the arrangement. This will support the Council in meeting its duties during a time of change; Ofsted regulation for this sector is due to be introduced in late 2023 and is expected to cause some disruption within the marketplace as providers determine whether they are willing and able to meet the new guidelines. A DPS will create a more flexible solution providing the Council with improved access to suppliers in order to meet need.

The DPS will be for an initial period 10 years although actual expenditure levels will fluctuate in line with demand.

Recommendations

The Cabinet is recommended:

1. To note the information presented in this report regarding the creation of a Dynamic Purchasing System to support access to a range of services to provide supported accommodation and lodgings for Northumberland care leavers and young homeless.

2. To note that the value of this contract is approximately £1.25M per annum which over a 10-year period suggests a total value of £12.50M.
3. To authorise the Service Director of Children’s Social Care & Joint Interim Director of Children’s Services, to undertake a procurement exercise and award of the contracts.

Links to NCC Corporate Plan 2021 – 24

The procurement of these services will contribute across most of the Council’s Corporate Plan Priorities but particularly to “living and learning”. The procurement of supported accommodation and lodgings services for care leavers and young homeless shows that the Council are committed to providing sustainable support to children and families into the future.

Key Issues

1. The Council has a responsibility to provide support and accommodation to:
 - Looked After young people and Care leavers under the Children Act 1989.
 - Young people presenting as homeless and needing accommodation in line with the Statutory guidance - Provision of accommodation for 16- and 17-year-olds who may be homeless and/or require accommodation.
 - Separated children (formally known as unaccompanied asylum-seeking children).
 - Young people who require support after the age of 18 in line with the Staying Put agenda.
 - Other young people aged 16 and above who are beyond school leaving age who may require provision under this service as and when they meet varying Local Authority thresholds.
2. This responsibility is overseen by the Accommodation Service which sits within the Council’s Adolescent Services (NAS). They work alongside Social Workers and Leaving Care Support Workers, as well as officers from the Youth Justice Service to ensure that young people have access to appropriate accommodation and support to meet their needs.
3. Although there are appropriate checks in place to ensure that accommodation and support is delivered to a high standard this is currently unregulated. This will change following the Government’s announcement that it will implement mandatory national standards for supported accommodation for young people and will require Ofsted to register and inspect this provision. This is due to come into effect in late 2023 and is expected to cause some disruption within the marketplace as providers determine whether they are willing and able to meet the new guidelines. A DPS will create a more flexible solution during this period of change allowing suppliers to join the arrangement throughout the lifetime of the agreement and improving access to service provision.
4. Given the varying needs of young people and depending on their progress towards independence a range of services are required. Outlined below are the

commissioning intentions which will enable the Council to meet its duties in respect of this vulnerable cohort of young people.

Background

In order to meet the needs of young people two key protocols have been developed:

- A Care Leavers Accommodation & Support Protocol for young people leaving care and
- A Joint Housing Protocol has been developed for homeless 16/17 year olds.

Both protocols have a shared vision of ensuring young people receive the appropriate support to meet their accommodation and support needs and underpin the practice of both Housing Services and Children Services.

The intention is to commission integrated services so that there is a clear pathway of support, with access to accommodation and services that will provide an opportunity for progression for young people, enabling them to achieve greater capability of independent living.

The following services are required to meet need:

- **Single Occupancy Accommodation for Complex Young People at Risk** – this comprises accommodation and floating support delivered flexibly for young people who have a complex range of needs
- **Single Occupancy Accommodation for Young People at Risk with a Range of Needs** – this comprises accommodation and floating support delivered flexibly for young people at risk and who present with a range of needs
- **Group Accommodation** – this consists of individual rooms/flats with shared communal kitchen, bathroom and living room in an accommodation block, which must be fully furnished and well-appointed. Floating support must also be provided. This service is required to meet the needs of young people who are at significant risk or who are homeless.
- **Floating Support** – Floating Support workers will help young people to understand what it means to live independently and support them in achieving this. This may include support with housing issues, help with budgeting, education and training, debt advice, health advice and other areas as needed.
- **Supported Lodgings** - Supported Lodgings provides young people with a room in a home environment and the support and guidance of an adult or adults living there. Support and guidance can cover a huge range of areas, from helping young people develop life skills, through to simply allowing them to experience the ups and downs of living in a family group.

Implications

<p>Policy</p>	<p>This procedure follows LA Statutory regulations (2012) that ensure transparent commissioning procedure is followed on behalf of Local Authority commissioning of services.</p> <p>National standards for independent and semi-independent provision for looked-after children and care leavers aged 16 and 17 are due to be introduced in late 2023 which will be overseen by Ofsted. This requirement will be reflected within the tender specification.</p>
<p>Finance and value for money</p>	<p>Annual expenditure is estimated at £1.25M.</p> <p>Commissioning intentions have been developed to reflect statutory requirements. Through adopting an integrated model, the aspiration is that young people will receive an integrated service and can be supported to transition into adulthood.</p> <p>Value for money will be achieved via an open market procurement exercise.</p>
<p>Legal</p>	<p>The creation of a DPS requires support from Legal to develop the appropriate contractual documentation.</p>
<p>Procurement</p>	<p>The value of the proposal requires that an open market procurement exercise be undertaken in order to be compliant.</p> <p>The existing contract for the Supported Accommodation framework expires in January 23 although there is an option to extend. A re-commissioning exercise to create a DPS will be undertaken in 2022/23 to create a more flexible approach to engaging a range of providers.</p>
<p>Human Resources</p>	<p>In the event of the incumbent organisation(s) not being awarded the contract, TUPE considerations for current service staff will be the responsibility of the new provider and will be built into the contract arrangement.</p>
<p>Property</p>	<p>This is the responsibility of the Provider organisation(s) and will be built into the contract arrangement.</p>
<p>Equalities (Impact Assessment attached)</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>All Providers are expected to have an Equality and Diversity Policy and ensure that staff are trained appropriately.</p>

Risk Assessment	Included as part of standard Local Authority commissioning and procurement practice. The Local Authority is required to ensure commissioning of services is competitively tendered. If this tender is agreed by Cabinet, the risk of challenge will be mitigated.
Crime & Disorder	These services may support young people who may have had or still have links to the criminal justice system
Customer Consideration	The individual needs of young people are at the centre of the procurement process and subsequent service delivery. Providers will be expected to obtain regular feedback from young people. Results will be shared at Contract Management meetings which will be held quarterly.
Carbon reduction	Providers will be expected to participate in the Northumberland's Landlord Accreditation Scheme where appropriate. This includes the need for properties to hold an Energy Performance certificate which contributes to the Council's climate change and carbon footprint goals.
Health and Wellbeing	Providing a high-quality service to support vulnerable young people will have a positive impact upon health and wellbeing. There is an expectation that Providers will support young people to enjoy good physical, emotional and mental health, encouraging a healthy lifestyle and supporting access to information about health issues that allows them to make informed choices.
Wards	All

Report Sign Off

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Suki Binjal
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Jan Willis
Relevant Executive Director	Graham Reiter
Interim Chief Executive	Rick O'Farrell
Portfolio Holder(s)	Guy Renner-Thompson

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