

Open Report on behalf of Debbie Barnes, OBE, Executive Director of Children's Services

Report to:	Councillor Mrs P A Bradwell OBE, Executive Councillor for Adult Care, Health and Children's Services
Date:	30 July 2018
Subject:	Accommodation Pathway for Children and Young People
Decision Reference:	I015859
Key decision?	Yes

Summary:

Safe and stable accommodation with timely and appropriate levels of support is a fundamental building block for young people in Lincolnshire to improve their life chances, especially when faced with instability of accommodation or experiencing homelessness.

The Accommodation Pathway presented (Appendix A) reflects the existing and proposed accommodation and housing pathways for young people within Lincolnshire including Looked After Children and Care Leavers. It provides an overview of the opportunities for innovation, cost savings and effective service delivery. It critically recognises the preventative focus of keeping children within their family, wherever this is possible. It also reflects areas of early intervention and education through to independence and the support needed to enable children to succeed.

There are several work streams which underpin this pathway which seek to ensure all young people have the opportunities they need to eventually make a successful transition to adulthood and independence, by providing a range of support services most appropriate to their needs and circumstances.

Recommendation(s):

That the Executive Councillor approves the "Accommodation Pathway for Children and Young People" at Appendix A to this Report.

Alternatives Considered:

Not to document the Accommodation Pathway for Children and Young People or to adopt a different pathway.

The "Accommodation Pathway for Children and Young People" is a document which allows the Directorate to set out its vision and aspirations for children and young people requiring support with accommodation and demonstrate the strategy that will shape how the Council works in conjunction with partner agencies to fulfil its obligations, both as a corporate parent and the wider remit to promote the health and wellbeing of all children and young people in the county.

The pathway has been established following engagement with relevant stakeholders and is considered to be the approach which best delivers the Council's objectives and fulfils the Council's obligations.

Reasons for Recommendation:

The "Accommodation Pathway for Children and Young People" offers a detailed overview of current and future arrangements to improve the life chances and life choices of children and young people who require support with accommodation, ensuring they have the right opportunities to make a successful transition to adulthood and independence.

It identifies opportunities for improving the effectiveness of service delivery, from early intervention through to independence. It acknowledges the importance of collaboration and partnership working to develop local responses to accommodation requirements.

It will ensure the availability of safe, appropriate and stable accommodation options to enhance the present and future lives of children and young people.

1. Background

Locally, there has been significant activity around redesigning accommodation services in order to develop and grow capacity to help to prepare the Council to meet the challenges around extending Care Leavers offer up to the age of 25. It is important that services/resources are sustainable, effective and affordable.

The key drivers related to this work are founded upon ensuring positive long term outcomes for young people; the potential of generating significant cost savings; and ensuring a consistent quality of approach in our interventions. It also supports and promotes the aspiration that, wherever possible, young people in Lincolnshire are accommodated within their home area.

The strategic approach is based around:

- Working collaboratively with families and their wider network so that where safe to do so, children and young people remain with their family and friends.
- Intervening as early as possible to prevent housing instability and homelessness from occurring or persisting.

- Ensuring service pathways are planned and integrated to better meet the needs of children and young people experiencing housing instability and homelessness.
- Safeguarding children and young people who are at risk because of housing instability or homelessness.
- Improving transitions to adulthood and independence for children and young people.
- Making better use of available resources to maintain a sufficient range of accommodation-based services with support for children and young people.

The attached **Accommodation Pathway for Children and Young People** paper (Appendix A) outlines the options currently available, those that are under development, and the ambitions for future provision. It summarises the aspiration for children and young people to pass through the accommodation provisions available, and to ultimately move-on successfully to independent accommodation of their own.

The key developments around young people's accommodation are:

1) Staying Close

The Head of Regulated Services is developing options for young people leaving residential care to move into local accommodation in order to 'Stay Close' to their previous residential homes. A number of options are being explored, in the first instance, with West Lindsey District Council and North Kesteven District Council. These options will focus on medium to longer-term options for young people who are ready to transition to greater levels of independence and will include the ability for them to take on tenancies, preventing the need for further move-on accommodation.

2) INSA Local Offer (Fire Houses)

Development of a local intensive supported accommodation option is being led by the Head of Regulated Services. The first property is on course to go live imminently offering up to 4 semi-independent bed spaces in accommodation in the south of the county. The costing, staffing and the operating model have been agreed; recruitment has been undertaken; and work is currently being completed to train staff and transition the young people for move-in. This new offer will lead to significant savings for the Council, along with providing vastly improved, more flexible options and better quality of service to some of our more complex and difficult young people.

3) Development of Youth Housing Protocol

A multi-agency Youth Housing Protocol has now been agreed by all signatories - Lincolnshire County Council, incorporating Children's Services

and Adult Care/ Public Health Directorates, and the seven Lincolnshire District Councils. The Youth Homelessness Joint Protocol aims to define the working arrangements for all agencies involved in supporting 16 & 17 year olds, including Looked After Children (LAC), and Care Leavers aged 18-21 years who are in need of advice and assistance due to being homeless or at risk of homelessness.

This Protocol aims to better manage young people's experience of transitioning to adult supported accommodation and (semi) independent living options, and ensures that resources are aligned to help support the extension of the Care Leavers offer to the age of 25. The aim of the Protocol is to nurture a more collaborative partnership approach to what is on offer to Lincolnshire young people and ensure partner agencies play their part supporting young people.

Future work

1) Recommissioning of Youth housing

The process is due to start in September 2018 – the review of the Youth housing contract is timely and will present the opportunity for the Council to recommission a service in alignment with current developments. The existing arrangements have been revised as of 1 July 2018; this includes a reduction in the overall number of places available but an increase in the number of units and support hours relating to those young people with more complex behaviours.

Any recommissioning will also take into account the new Adolescent Risk Taking Behaviour Service which will provide a revised offer to the children and young people who are placed in all of Children's Services supported accommodation options. All of this work enables the Council to plan future commissioning with a richer, more developed needs analysis and a full consideration of how each component of the pathway fits together to enable young people to move onto their own independent accommodation.

2) Review of existing resources

Children's Services will undertake a comprehensive review of existing in-house accommodation services to ensure best use of resources including enhancing the capacity and usage of in-house foster care services, and an appraisal of the Residential Homes estate to maximise occupancy and meet the needs of the cohort of children and young people requiring support with accommodation, including short breaks services.

2. Legal Issues:

Equality Act 2010

Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- * Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act
- * Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- * Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
The relevant protected characteristics are age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation
Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:
 - * Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic
 - * Take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it.
 - * Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low

The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities

Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to tackle prejudice, and promote understanding

Compliance with the duties in section 149 may involve treating some persons more favourably than others

The duty cannot be delegated and must be discharged by the decision-maker. To discharge the statutory duty the decision-maker must analyse all the relevant material with the specific statutory obligations in mind. If a risk of adverse impact is identified consideration must be given to measures to avoid that impact as part of the decision making process

There is no single overarching Equality Impact Analysis covering all of the myriad developments identified in Appendix A. Rather each development will require its own analysis focused on any positive or adverse impact for any of the protected characteristic groups of the proposed changes. These will be shared with the Directorate Management Team and updated regularly as each development progresses.

Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS)

The Council must have regard to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the Joint Health & Well Being Strategy (JHWS) in coming to a decision

The Accommodation Pathway contributes to the following themes of the JSNA

Be Healthy

Children and young people likely to be supported with accommodation may include some with issues such as substance and alcohol misuse, offending behaviours and mental health problems.

The support offered will be tailored to the needs of the young people and empower them to address such issues whilst accessing education and training opportunities to enhance long-term employment prospects.

Stay Safe

The primary focus of supported accommodation is to provide children and young people with a safe and stable environment in which to learn and achieve whilst preventing both themselves and others, including local communities, from harm.

Enjoy and Achieve

A key feature of the service delivery within supported accommodation options is to enable children and young people to maintain education and training opportunities. Individual support plans will be tailored to meet the needs of children and young people with regard to education and training.

Positive Contribution

Individual children and young people will be active in developing support plans and identifying the outcomes they wish to achieve whilst accessing supported accommodation. Service provision will empower children and young people to make use of universal services, where appropriate, that are available locally.

Achieve Economic Wellbeing

Children and young people accessing accommodation options will have the opportunity to maintain the same education and training opportunities as their peers, enhancing their longer-term employment prospects.

The Lincolnshire Health & Well Being Strategy includes five main themes, with an additional theme of “mental health” running throughout the document. The Accommodation Pathway supports the following themes.

Promoting healthier lifestyles

Commissioned services will support some children and young people with substance and alcohol misuse issues as well as helping children and young people's sense of mental wellbeing through access to support services. Furthermore, the primary focus is to provide children and young people with a safe and stable environment in which they, and others, will remain safe and free from harm.

Improve health and social outcomes for C&YP and reduce inequalities

Services commissioned under the Accommodation Pathway will focus on supporting children and young people to maintain education and training opportunities thereby enhancing long-term employment prospects, life chances and reducing inequalities. It will also empower children and young people to build up resilience through their relationships with relevant staff and support networks both within the provision itself and in the wider community through access, where applicable, to universal and targeted services.

Tackling the social determinants of health

As indicated above, accessing and maintaining education and training opportunities will form an integral part of any accommodation options being offered to enhance longer-term employment prospects, one of the key social determinants of health.

Crime and Disorder

Under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Council must exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area (including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment), the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in its area and re-offending in its area

Services commissioned through the Accommodation Pathway will offer a secure and stable environment for children and young people, often removing them from households or communities where they may have been likely to have suffered harm and/or be involved in and/or experienced crime and disorder, keeping those young people and the wider community safe from harm. It will also support some children and young people with substance misuse issues to address those issues as part of the support offered within the accommodation options.

3. Conclusion

Accommodation is fundamental to the safety and stability of all Lincolnshire young people. There is a need to revisit and grow the housing and accommodation options in the county to offer a more localised response.

The need to build resilience into the available housing options is important to ensure it is appropriate and proportionate to best meet the needs of children and young people. In addition, the Council is seeking to build engagement and collaboration with key partners and forge a commitment to work in partnership when housing children and young people, including Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

Locally, the innovative approach to a number of financial and resource pressures is starting to help meet future demands and shape a strategic vision. The Accommodation Pathway reflects the need to develop and maximise best use of

in-house options to provide increased assurance in respect of quality, longer-term outcomes and value for money.

The local INSA offer, in conjunction with increased support from partners and the impending refresh of the Youth Housing contract, presents many opportunities to re-evaluate the Directorate's accommodation offer. It will also widen Children's Services options in respect of complex young people and, together with the new service offer to Adolescents, will support stability in the provision offered together with plans to support children and young people to return to family (wherever safe and appropriate to do so) or progressing at the right time to their own independent housing.

4. Legal Comments:

The Council has power to adopt the Accommodation Pathway for Children and Young People attached at Appendix A.

The decision is consistent with the Policy Framework and within the remit of the Executive Councillor.

5. Resource Comments:

The recommendation to approve the strategy on Accommodation Pathway for Children and Young People will have no immediate financial implications. The financial implications for each development activity within the strategy will be considered in detail to ensure value for money is achieved when the proposals are formalised. The INSA Local Offer which is due to go live shortly will materially reduce the costs currently being incurred on this cohort of young people including having better outcomes for them.

The Full Council has recognised the increasing cost pressures relating to the Local Authority's legal duty to provide supported accommodation for homeless young people over 16 years and care leavers by increasing the budget by £0.6m in 2017/18 and a further £1.641m in 2018/19. These budget requirements were to align the budget to anticipated demand and commissioning arrangements developed through this strategy.

The strategy considers more suitable and cost effective provision to best meet the needs of the young people, and it also provides an opportunity to review the Local Authority's accommodation offer, and engagement with partners.

6. Consultation

a) Has Local Member Been Consulted?

N/A

b) Has Executive Councillor Been Consulted?

Yes

c) Scrutiny Comments

The report will be considered by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 20 July 2018 and the comments of the Committee will be reported to the Executive Councillor prior to her reaching her decision.

d) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?

Yes – individual Impact Analysis will be undertaken relevant to each development and shared with the Directorate Management Team to gauge any positive or adverse impact on groups with protected characteristics.

e) Risks and Impact Analysis

See the body of the report.

7. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Children and Young People Accommodation Pathway

8. Background Papers

No background papers within the Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this Report.

This report was written by Andrew Morris, who can be contacted on 01522 553916 or andrew.morris@lincolnshire.gov.uk.