

Paper for HSSP
Care leavers and Vulnerable Young People/Children In care
Submitted by Devon's Children and Young People's Services

Introduction.

On the 12th October 2009 Ron Mayers set out the need to consider the implication of the Southwark ruling for young people within the JSNA for homelessness.

Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) now have some indicative data to predict trends and needs for young people in housing need post the Southwark judgement earlier this year.

CYPS request that the HSSP and JCB consider a number of issues in regard to how young people who are in care and leaving care are assisted by the Supporting People grant and strategy both as a result of the Southwark ruling but also in response to wider changes in relations to our responsibility towards this group of young people.

The recent changes in legislation and practice are

- a) The concept of "corporate parenting" has been introduced and is a key under lying principle of Devon Children and Young People Plan. This clearly places a responsibility on Devon to use all it influences and resources to support young people leaving its care.**
- b) Care Matters Green Paper and the following legislation passed after the death of Victoria Climbié places a "duty to co-operate" on all agencies including Local Housing authorities and local councils.**
- c) In the Green paper - (but not included in legalisation) was an expectation that young people who are leaving local authority care should be supported to remain in their care placements beyond the age of 18. DCSF have set up 12 pilots to test out models of how best this can be achieved. In Devon we are currently supporting 37 care leavers to remain with their former foster carers' post 18. (We are responsible for about 100 18/19 year olds in total). We know that supporting young people to remain in their placements post 18 improve their chances of successfully engaging in EET and over the last 3 years we have seen the number of care leavers in Higher Education in Devon rise from 4 to 23 (this is double the national average). These placement costs are being met by using Local Housing Allowance and an initiative scheme of joint funding from the care leavers service and the Local Housing Authorities.**

- d) **The Southwark ruling makes it clear that vulnerable 16/17 year olds who are homeless must be viewed as “children in need” and if accommodation is needed this must be provided under s20 1989 Children Act. Both the DCSF and CLG have made it clear that no additional funding will be provided to meet this requirement. To date 41 young people have been accommodated by C+YPS under this ruling.**

These changes raise the following questions about the way we are funding and organising housing provision for care leavers/ Children in Care;-

- 1) The care leavers service is funding young people to remain in placements post 18 which is known to significantly improve outcomes for Care Leavers. How can the care leavers service and Housing Authorities be supported to manage this?**
- 2) We need to look at the young people at risk Supported Housing Sector and consider whether it is meeting the housing and support needs of young people. The LPSA evaluation last year found high/complex need accommodation to be a gap in provision across Devon.**
- 3) Specifically are supported housing units appropriate to use for vulnerable young people in care and should there be an increase in the provision of supported lodgings? (We know that the outcomes for young people placed in supported lodgings are better than for those placed in supported housing units, as referenced in the DCSF publication “Journeys From Home”**
- 4) Given that CYPS can not declare a young person “intentionally homeless” do we have the correct range of provision to support this small but demanding group. (Last year 15 young people were found intentionally homeless – these were young people who made a formal homeless application, many young people don’t and are not able to access supported housing due to their needs) Whilst some of them should be looked after in higher supported care settings this will not be appropriate for all these young people.**
- 5) CLG and DCSF view the joint commissioning and strategy to support young people in Housing Need in Camden and Oxfordshire as examples of good practice and ones that should be used in other authorities. Oxfordshire face many of the same challenges as we do in Devon --they are a two tier authority with 8 Local Housing Authorities. Whilst we are developing in Devon some excellent joint initiatives, it would seem sensible to use these exemplars to model development on.**
- 6) In order to meet our responsibilities we need to ensure that not only are the services we commission reflecting the needs of young people in our care and leaving our care but that we can define and show how we are using Supporting People funding to discharge our corporate parenting responsibilities towards this group.**

- 7) There needs to be a review as to how and to whom Supporting People funding is directed for the support of 16/17 years olds. This is especially relevant for the jointly commissioned contract for supported lodgings.**

Currently there is an underspend in the Supporting People payment to hosts budget. This budget covers placements made by the Housing Authorities. In the last contract monitoring data two thirds of the referrals to the scheme were from CYPS and just a third from the Housing Authorities, a significant decrease in the trend of referrals from the Housing Authorities prior to Southwark. The way the contract is set up that funding has not been redirected to CYPS to pay Hosts for the same young people that prior to Southwark. We feel this needs to be addressed.

Currently CYPS are up to capacity on their contract whilst there are vacancies on the 27 units ring fenced for the Housing Authorities.

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