

Classification: Open	Decision Type: Key
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Report to:	Cabinet	Date: 15 March 2023
Subject:	Neighbourhood Support for Young People – Great Places accommodation and support services review	
Report of	Cabinet Member for Adult Care, Health, and Wellbeing	

Summary

1. Accommodation for Young People, combined with structured support, is essential in preventing homelessness, improving life chances, and helping young people live independently by developing tenancy sustainment skills. These services are also important to support vulnerable young people to access opportunities to build resilience, such as employment, education, and training programmes, improve health and wellbeing and access other support which they may need for independent living in the community. Stable and secure accommodation is essential to help young people develop aspirations and achieve personal goals.
2. Great Places were commissioned in April 2020 to deliver accommodation support services for young people between the ages of 16-25, at a cost envelope of £366,378. The service specification had the following requirements for the service to deliver:
 - a. **Young People’s supported accommodation (16-25 years old)**- 24 units of supported housing for young people experiencing homelessness and needing help towards independent living. However, Great Places deliver 25 units, adding value to the service.
 - b. **Teenage Parent’s supported accommodation (16-25 years old)** –12 units of safe supported accommodation, for pregnant teenagers, teenage mothers, and their children.
 - c. **Floating Support Services** – for 5 young people who are 16–17-years old, over a 3-month period, who are moving into their new homes in the community from statutory temporary accommodation.
 - d. **Resettlement and tenancy sustainment support** –3-month support package for young people moving from statutory services directly into the community, who may have a range of different support needs.
3. The Contract was awarded from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2023. The contractual arrangements give the Council the authority to extend for up to a further 2 years on an annual basis. On this basis, the Community Commissioning Division has reviewed the performance of the service and has concluded recommendations for the next 2 years.

Recommendation(s)

4. The recommendations are to:
 - a. Extend contractual arrangements from the 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 aligned to the proposed service delivery model. An additional year extension will be agreed subject to continued satisfactory performance of the provider.
 - b. Reduce the contract value from £366,378 to £348,585 per annum - saving the Council of £35,586 over two years (£17,793 per annum in year 1 and year 2 of the extension period).
 - c. Delegate authority to the Executive Director Strategic Commissioning for any future extensions relevant to this contract. (Within the specified Contract provision).

Reasons for recommendation(s)

- 5.1 Great Places started their contract on 1st April 2020 at the beginning of the Covid pandemic and during the first lockdown. This brought significant challenges, with customers having to isolate and stakeholders offering reduced services, which meant mobilisation plans for the start of the contract were delayed. Unfortunately, there was a lack of engagement from the previous provider to ensure a smooth transition for customers and TUPE of staff. The new service inherited additional workforce challenges, including long term sickness and historical stigma of the previous service not being an appropriate setting for young people to develop independent living skills. Great Places have worked well to overcome these challenges and provide a different housing offer.
- 5.2 Despite these challenges Great Places have achieved good outcomes for young people and offered safe and secure accommodation. Since commencement of the contract they have invested **£232,566** in capital works refurbishing the buildings at Castlecroft House and Peel Lodge. The upgrade has contributed hugely to offering a safe and welcoming environment for customers.
- 5.3 The Community Commissioning Division is confident, that Great Places will continue to deliver on this contract by working in partnership with stakeholders and supporting young people to achieve improved outcomes in all areas of their lives.
- 5.4 The Council is currently in a position where it must make efficiency savings. Great Places have proposed the following efficiency savings and contractual arrangements:
 - a) Following a robust financial review, it is proposed to reduce the contract value from £366,378 to £348,585, delivering a saving to the Council of £35,586 over two years (£17,793 per annum in year 1 and year 2 of the extension period). This saving will be achieved by deleting a 23.93hr Housing and Wellbeing Assistant post, which is currently a vacant position at Castlecroft House.

b) Great Places are confident that this will not negatively impact their support delivery to young people and that the service specification can continue to be delivered with confidence.

c) Bury Council commissions 24 units of supported housing for young people, however Great Places will continue to provide 25 units.

d) Even though Great Places are commissioned to provide Floating Support Services for 5 young people who are 16–17-years old, who are moving on from statutory temporary accommodation, Great Places has offered floating support to *all* young people (not age specific) leaving the services, with the option to opt out. This flexibility is built in to tailor the service to the young person's needs and wishes and provides added value to the contract.

Alternative options considered and rejected

- a) The alternative is to retender this provision. However, the department is satisfied with the providers performance and service delivery and the existing contractual arrangement allows for a 2-year extension.

Report Author and Contact Details:

Name: Victoria Crookes

Position: Integrated Commissioning Officer

Department: One Commissioning Organisation- Community Commissioning Division

E-mail: V.Crookes@bury.gov.uk

Background

- 6.1 The division reviewed and commissioned a range of neighbourhood support housing services in 2018/19 for people to develop independent skills to prevent homelessness and sustain future tenancies. Each service area was commissioned as separate lots from 1 to 4. Lot 4, Neighbourhood Support for Young People, was awarded to Great Places to deliver.
- 6.2 The provision for Lot 4 services ends on the 31st March 2023, therefore there was a need to review the existing provision to ascertain future direction and outcomes achieved.
- 6.3 The current contract value for the provision is £366,378.
- 6.4 The division developed the Neighbourhood Support Housing Services Outcomes Framework to measure the provider performance throughout the term of the contract.

Review Methodology and Sample:

- 7.1 To ensure a robust review and support recommendations the following exercises were carried out by the Community Commissioning Division:

- a) A desktop analysis to review all data relating to service delivery since commencement of the contract and consideration of several case studies supplied by the provider.
- b) Visits to each site took place to carry out the following checks:
- Accommodation 'Quality Standards' Assessments
 - Customer File Audits x 4
 - Staff File Audits x 4
 - Training Matrix Audit
 - Policies & Procedures Audit
 - Staffing model / Rota's Audit
 - Business Continuity Plan Audit
 - Internal Audits Check
- c) A consultation exercise was carried out using structured surveys and face to face semi-structured interviews with the following groups:
- Staff Members – 7 Responses
 - Customers – 26 Responses
 - Stakeholders – 8 Responses

Findings

7.2 Key highlights for consideration from the review of all data relating to service delivery are detailed in the table below. This shows good utilisation of the services offered, with services often at full capacity. There are excellent outcomes in relation to numbers of young people supported to access health and social care services and numbers of young people supported to access employment, voluntary and educational opportunities:

ACTIVITY	April 2020 to Sept 2020	Oct 2020 to Sept 2021	Oct 2021 to March 2022	April 2022 to Jan 2023
Number of 16-17 year old's accessing accommodation and support	1	6	3	5
Number of 18+ accessing accommodation and support	14	36	18	48
Number of young people supported to move on to independent living in a planned way with floating support	14	30	12	13
Number of young people supported to move on to independent living in a planned way without floating support	1	6	5	3
Number of young people accessing floating support services in the community	10	22	14	25

ACTIVITY	April 2020 to Sept 2020	Oct 2020 to Sept 2021	Oct 2021 to March 2022	April 2022 to Jan 2023
Numbers of young people supported to access employment / voluntary / educational opportunity	11	33	10	32
Numbers of young people supported to access health and / or social care services	14	36	19	39

Further analysis of data shows:

- The number of young people accessing resettlement support from statutory services (LAC) since commencement of the contract is 16
- The number of safeguarding alerts raised by the provider from 2020 to present day is 17 of those 12 were in relation to mental health, 4 were in relation to a child and 1 was in relation to physical health. Evidence has been provided which demonstrates the provider is pro-active in raising safeguarding concerns and working in partnership with Bury Safeguarding Team.
- The number of complaints logged from 2020 to present day is 3
- The number of compliments logged from 2020 to present day is 4, although it was acknowledged that regular verbal compliments are given to staff from customers and stakeholders but not formally recorded.
- Data provided shows evidence of excellent void turnover.
- The average length of time customers access floating support services for is 4.5 months. Currently 25 customers are receiving floating support services. Although this gives us added value from the contract, we would like to see better utilisation of the generic floating support service we commission.
- Demand:
 - a. From Jan 2022 to Dec 2022, Castlecroft received 119 referrals of those 3 did not meet the criteria either due to age or needs.
 - b. From Jan 2022 to Dec 2022, Ellen Court received 10 referrals of those 1 did not meet the criteria due to age.
- The number of young people supported to return to the family home is 12.
- There have only been 3 tenancies that ended in possession.
- There were only 5 Anti-Social behavior incidents recorded.

7.3 Key highlights for consideration from audits

7.3.1 Accommodation 'Quality Standards' Assessments were carried out at Castlecroft House, Peel Lodge and Ellen Court. The standards were met at all three sites. The buildings at Castlecroft and Peel Lodge have

recently benefited from significant refurbishment costing £232,566. The upgrade has contributed hugely to improving the accommodation and offering a safe and welcoming environment for customers. The accommodation sites offer:

- Castlecroft House – 16 Bedsits with small kitchen area and bathroom with shower. Access to communal lounge, training room and laundry room. A communal garden with secure fencing.
- Peel Lodge – 9 self-contained 1 bed flats with living area, separate bedroom, and modern kitchen. All tenants at Peel Lodge can access the communal facilities at Castlecroft House.
- Ellen Court – 12 self-contained flats (2 x 2 bed and 10 x 1 bed) with bathroom and open plan kitchen. Onsite Creche facility with secure outdoor play area, a communal lounge and laundry.

7.3.2 Customer File Audits evidence a strength-based approach using dynamic support planning and each customer has a personal safety plan which includes detailed risk assessments. There was evidence of regular wellbeing sessions, where goal setting is agreed, and each customer has a wellbeing plan that demonstrates good engagement with a range of different stakeholders to address the health and social care needs of young people.

7.3.3 Audits of staff files, training and compliance, policies & procedures and staffing model demonstrates safe staffing and recruitment procedures, an extensive training offer with good compliance and robust policies and procedures, which are clear with evidence of regular review. In addition, the employer has committed to paying staff in excess of the living wage and has made several 'cost of living' payments to staff over the last 12 months, as well as making a commitment to award a salary increment of 6-7.5% to all staff in 2023.

7.4 **Key highlights for consideration from customer consultation.**

There were 26 responses to our survey and semi structured interviews with 6 customers:

7.4.1 To help us check we are helping young people who are most in need we asked customers to tell us their circumstances before receiving the service. Responses showed:

- **11 had experienced a family breakdown**
- **11 had been sofa surfing**
- **5 were street homeless**

7.4.2 69% of customers told us staff supported and encouraged them to develop independent living skills. Examples included cooking, budgeting, cleaning, laundry, paying bills, planning shopping and reporting repairs.

- 7.4.3 73% of customers told us receiving support has helped improve their health and wellbeing.
- 7.4.4 46% of customers told us staff support and encouraged them to explore training, education, employment and/or voluntary opportunities.
- 7.4.5 85% of customers told us they are supported to register for housing and bid for properties.
- 7.4.6 To help us understanding barriers to move on we asked young people what causes delays to you moving on to your own place in the community?
- 42% said there is a lack of properties to bid on
 - 23% said they bid on properties regularly but do not get an offer
- 7.4.7 To help us check the need for 'Young Peoples Accommodation & Support Services' we asked customers where they think they would be if these services were not available. Responses included:
- ***"I would be on the streets in a very bad way"***
 - ***"I would be in a bad situation living on the streets because I was feeling like a burden to friend's families who were letting me sleep at their house, my mental health and physical health would be worse as I wasn't eating, I had no benefits and no money for food. I would be in danger because it was frightening as a young girl on the streets, I felt vulnerable, I was 20 years old. If it were not for this service, I would probably not be here now."***
 - ***"Probably still be homeless & I struggle a lot with budgeting, reading & writing."***
 - ***"At my dad's which is not safe for me or my child, there are no carpets, no food, dog poo in the house and drugs everywhere so I would probably end up on the streets."***
- 7.4.8 A small number of concerns were raised by 19% of customers with valued feedback on how improvements could be made. In response to this the provider worked proactively in collaboration with community commissioning and customers to develop an action plan which was swiftly implemented and will be monitored jointly going forward.

7.5 **Key highlights for consideration from stakeholder consultation**

There were 8 responses to our survey:

- 88% of stakeholders told us they feel the young people's accommodation and support services contribute to reducing homelessness.
- 63% of stakeholders told us they feel the staff effectively support and encourage customers to access services they may need, such as the GP, Hospital, Bury Achieve, Social Work Team.
- 50% of stakeholders feel staff support young people effectively to reduce drug and alcohol misuse
- 50% of stakeholders feel the staff support young people effectively to reduce offending and anti-social behaviour
- 75% of stakeholders feel the provider deals with incidents involving young people effectively

7.5.1 We asked stakeholders to tell us what they feel the barriers are to moving people on to independent living at the right time. Responses included:

- ***"Lack of accommodation available from Six town housing. Delay is created which has an impact on the young people's emotional well-being. Heightens their anxiety as they are as eager to move on to independent living."***
- ***"Support given to residents to develop tenancy skills is good, general shortage of housing stock seems to be limitation which is obviously out of their control."***
- ***"Capacity is the main issues we face when looking for suitable accommodation for young people"***
- ***"More accommodation being available to young people. At times vulnerable young people cannot get into Ellen Court and Castlecroft during a crisis because there is a waiting list, and the accommodation is full. That means young people remain in risky situations for longer as there is nowhere for them to go."***

7.5.2 Further quotes from stakeholders include:

- ***"I have seen a marked improvement in my customer since living at Castlecroft, he has improved personal hygiene, he is now cleaning his flat with support and encouragement, managing tasks he previously avoided, gaining weight and appears much happier"***
- ***"Amazing facility here, the staff are always so welcoming too and there is a lovely feeling about the place. The communal areas are light, well-lit and decorated to a high standard."***
- ***"From my experience, residents are encouraged to try cooking and the communal areas are made use of well. There is always space to have meetings with residents in a private space alongside a place to work when necessary. Staff are accommodating and friendly."***

7.6 Key highlights for consideration from staff consultation.

There were 7 responses to our survey and semi structured interviews with 3 staff members:

- 86% of staff told us they are encouraged and supported to learn from incidents and safeguarding alerts
- 43% of staff rated the 'Culture' in the Company at a level 5 (Excellent)
- 71% of staff rated 'Communication' in the Company at level 4 (Good)
- 71 % of staff are aware of what support the employer offers to enhance their health and well-being.
- 57% of staff feel their health and wellbeing matters to the company
- 43% of staff told us that overall, they enjoy working for the company and 43% of staff told us overall they sometimes enjoy working for the company.

7.6.1 A small number of concerns were raised by staff regarding the retention of staff and use of agency. It is acknowledged that the provider faced challenges with staffing when the contract was taken over. These issues are now resolved, and a full staffing team is now in place.

Social Value

8.1 Great Places have an Employability Coach that provides personalised support to help customers across all services. Customers can access support with employment, training, and volunteering opportunities via drop-in sessions at each scheme. There is a budget that can be accessed for support with costs associated with equipment such as laptops / tablets and dongle for internet access, travel costs, uniform, and training. Great Places also offer the 'BOSSIT' program to customers who are interested in becoming self-employed.

Future Considerations and Plans

- 9.1 Feedback gathered from customers and stakeholders indicates that the main barrier to moving on from young people's accommodation-based services to independent living in the community is a lack of available properties in the social housing sector.
- 9.2 The Community Commissioning Division will ensure these findings are used to influence our longer-term strategic plans by working in partnership with our colleagues in the Business Growth and Infrastructure Department.
- 9.3 It is recommended that there is further benchmarking on models of accommodation for young people to explore if offering more settled, longer-term accommodation, with enhanced living, social, educational, and recreational space achieves further improved outcomes for young people.

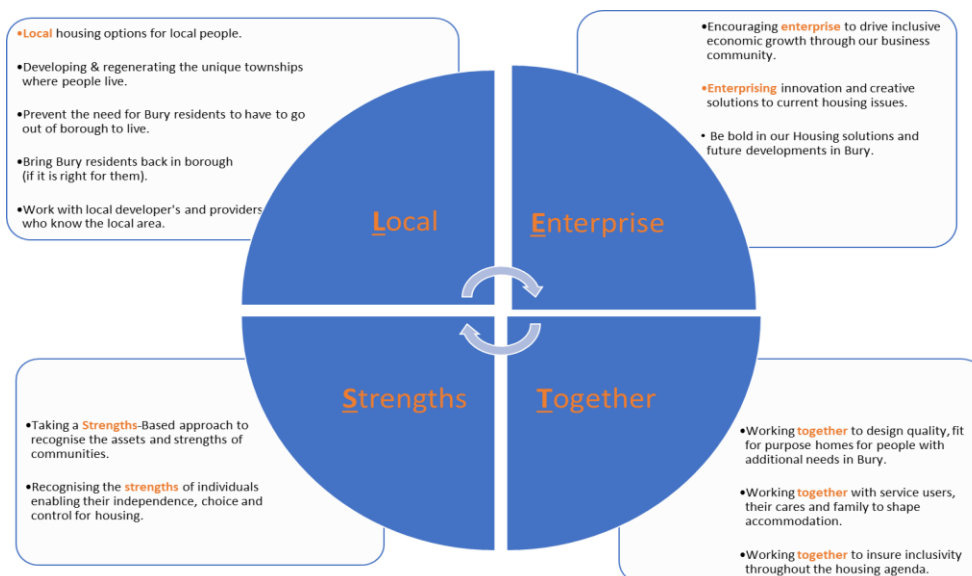
- 9.4 As part of this review consideration has been given to the Department for Education's draft quality standards for supported accommodation: [Draft for consultation - Guide to supported accommodation regulations including Quality Standards \(education.gov.uk\)](#) the guidance details the plans for Ofsted to inspect supported accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds. Bury's Accommodation Standard's checklist ([Checklist of accommodation standards and tenancy-related housing services in supported housing - Bury Council](#)) has been used as a tool to assess the quality of the supported accommodation currently offered and the division is satisfied that these standards are met.
- 9.5 A small number of concerns were raised by 19% of customers with valued feedback on how improvements could be made. In response to this the provider worked proactively with community commissioning and customers to develop an action plan which was swiftly implemented and will be monitored jointly going forward.

Contributing to wider Bury strategies

- 10.1 Great Places contribute to Bury Council's 2030 Housing Strategy and the 'Let's Do It' Strategy by attending the following meetings working collaboratively with council colleagues and stakeholders:
- Bury Homelessness Partnership Meeting
 - Mental Health & Homelessness Group
 - Children & Young Peoples VCF Forum
- 10.2 Furthermore the young people's accommodation and support services delivered by Great Places contribute to helping us achieve our vision of 'A better future for the children of the Borough' and the core outcomes set out in our 'Let's Do It Strategy' of:
- Improved quality of life
 - Improved educational attainment
 - Increased adult skill levels and employability
 - Inclusive economic growth

Links with the Corporate Priorities:

The following diagram describes how the ASC housing programme for those with additional needs links with the corporate priorities:



Equality Impact and Considerations:

The outcomes of the initial equality impact analysis are positive. The services, including young peoples supported accommodation, floating support, tenancy sustainment support and teenage parent's accommodation will be available for all vulnerable young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness who need help to develop independent living skills and sustain their tenancy.

Environmental Impact and Considerations:

An environmental impact assessment has not been undertaken for the scheme, as there are no implications or carbon impact of this decision.

Assessment and Mitigation of Risk:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Lack of available move on properties for young people who are tenancy ready which may risk blockages for young people needing supported accommodation.	<p>Provider will offer weekly drop-in bidding sessions to support young people to register and bid for properties regularly to increase chances of securing a tenancy in the community.</p> <p>Work closely with the housing assessment team and develop strong relationships and have regular communication.</p> <p>There is the option to explore a move-on protocol.</p>

	The division will work with our colleagues in the Business Growth and Infrastructure Department to ensure they are aware of the growing demand for general needs housing from young people ready to move on. Although it is recognised this is a national problem.
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Legal Implications:

The contract extension is in line with the original agreement, the contract was awarded from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2023. The arrangements give the Council the authority to extend for up to a further 2 years on an annual basis.

Financial Implications:

Extension of the contract is within the contractual arrangements of the original procurement and the extension is being delivered within a reduced financial envelope. The savings of £17,793 per annum are contributing to the overall savings target for the Directorate and are built into the budget for 2023/24.

Background papers:

N/A

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

Term	Meaning