

APPENDIX A – Commissioning Strategy Summary

1. The Commissioning Strategy

1.1 Between March and September 2014, Children’s Services conducted a review of existing arrangements for semi-independent living services for LAC aged 16+ and Care Leavers. This led to the development of a Commissioning Strategy which sets out the department’s purpose and intentions regarding these services for the next four years.

1.2 The Commissioning Strategy consists of three parts:

- **Part A – Analysis:** which provides an overview of current arrangements, identified strengths and areas for development, total SIL spend, needs analysis, market analysis and benchmarking research;
- **Part B – Pathways:** which addresses Staying Put (staying put arrangements are where a young person remains with their foster carer post 18) and supported accommodation as the different accommodation pathways for young people leaving care and provides an overview of the vision / expectations for future SIL service arrangements;
- **Part C – Options:** which provides the contracting options and procurement approaches which have been considered and the different recommendations for implementation in LBHF.

2. Commissioning Strategy – Analysis

2.1 For care leavers in Hammersmith & Fulham, a dedicated Care Leaver pathway is currently commissioned as part of Supporting People arrangements, providing 59 units of accommodation (20 high / 39 medium support) across 8 properties located in the borough. Services are delivered through three supported accommodation contracts with two providers, which commenced on 1st April 2010 and are due to expire 1st April 2015.

2.2 Supporting People provision in LBHF meets approximately 50% of the total placement requirements, with 21,535 bed nights available (59 FTE). Other semi-independent living placements, typically out-of-borough, are required for a variety of reasons, including young people placed in foster care outside of LBHF; young people with additional needs beyond the Supporting People provision; or young people who cannot be placed in LBHF due to safeguarding issues. These placements are arranged by the Placements Team in the Commissioning directorate of Children’s Services.

2.3 These additional placements are spot-purchased as and when required from a large pool of private and voluntary sector providers. It is an unregulated market in which quality and price varies hugely, and most of the providers are small businesses with little infrastructure.

2.4 Through the review, social work practitioners, commissioners, young people and providers identified common themes as key areas for service development:

- Improved focus on outcomes instead of prescriptive support hours;
- Greater consistency in service quality and standards, supported by enhanced monitoring arrangements;
- Increased clarity of roles and responsibilities for providers, social workers, commissioners and young people;
- Consistent processes for referrals, move-in, move-on and ongoing arrangements to improve placement resilience.

2.5 Young people's views were central to the review of existing arrangements and planning for future services. Their ideas included:

- More needs to be done to reduce support levels at the right times, in order to prevent young people from becoming over-reliant on the service;
- More opportunities for group work with other young people would be a good way of developing life skills and would help address the isolation experienced by some young people in semi-independent living;
- More 'supervision' sessions with their support worker to monitor their progress towards agreed outcomes, including what life skills they have developed.

2.6 In 2013/14, 117 full time equivalent (one placement for one full year) semi-independent living placements were commissioned for LAC aged 16+ and Care Leavers from Hammersmith & Fulham.

2.7 Based on analysis of historic and current LAC populations and trends, commissioners predict that this service requirement will remain relatively constant. It is projected that between 116 and 121 FTE SIL placements will be required annually up to 2018.

2.8 It is estimated that 29% of such placements will be required for young people with high support needs, 39% for medium support needs, and 32% for lower support needs.

3. Commissioning Strategy – Pathways

3.1 There are three main pathways identified for young people leaving care:

- Directly entering independent living in the community, if the young person is believed to be ready;
- Staying Put arrangements, enabling young people to remain with their long term foster carer for a period of time post 18;
- Supported accommodation.

3.2 A policy for Staying Put arrangements is currently in development, including consultation with the Fostering & Adoption Service, social workers, young people and the local Fostering Association.

3.3 In the Commissioning Strategy, the department's vision for supported accommodation emphasises the expectation of providers to share our

corporate parenting responsibility and aspirations for Looked After Children aged 16+ and Care Leavers, acting as any good parent would for their own child.

3.4 In order to fulfil this corporate parenting responsibility and enable young people to transition successfully into independence and adult life, supported accommodation will be based on four key principles, or 'pillars of parenting':

- **Personalisation:** Services tailored to the needs and requirements of each young person.
- **Outcomes:** A focus on how well the service is helping young people to prepare for independent living, rather than simply what is being delivered.
- **Collaboration:** Improved teamwork, communication and co-ordination between all professionals providing support for young people.
- **Community:** An emphasis on young people feeling safe, secure and comfortable as part of a community, in both their accommodation and local neighbourhood.

4. Commissioning Strategy – Options

4.1 It is projected that over the next 5 years, the council will need to provide provision for between 116-121 Care Leavers at any one time. Through agreements with a number of Registered Social Landlords, 71 units of accommodation are made available to the council within the borough. This accommodation can provide for approximately 60% of the borough's care leavers. In addition to this the council will need to ensure there is sufficient capacity for the additional 40% of the borough's requirements.

4.2 Commissioners have explored a number of options to deliver the councils requirements as set out within this report; these options include:

- **Approved providers list** - An approved provider list is a list of potential providers for a service that is maintained by the commissioning organisation. Providers have to pre-qualify for the list through a selection process using a pre-qualification questionnaire. When services are actually required, commissioners 'call off' the list by issuing a separate spot contract that sets out the remaining terms and specific service requirements. No specification is agreed and no prices are set when an Approved Provider List is set up
- **Block Contract Arrangements** - A block contract guarantees a certain volume of business with a dedicated service provider over a set period of time to an agreed written specification. Block contracts are typically set at a fixed price.
- **Dynamic purchasing** - . A DPS is an electronic system for the purchase of commonly used goods, services or works, usually limited to a maximum duration of four years. It can only be established using the rules of the Open Procedure and must be open throughout its duration for the admission of any provider which satisfies the selection criteria and submits an indicative tender which complies with the service specification.

- **Framework Agreements** - A framework agreement is an overarching agreement with a fixed number of providers which sets out the broad terms (both quality and price) on which the commissioning organisation will purchase services from those providers in the future. The core service specification and prices are set when the Framework Agreement is established.
- **Spot purchase contracting** - Stand-alone spot contracts are individual contracts for services that are provided on a case-by-case basis, typically for an individual service user. There is no other overarching agreement in place and the spot contract sets out all the terms and conditions.

4.3 Commissioners have examined the 5 contracting options in order to propose the best option for the council of delivering the commissioning intentions set out in the strategy. It is therefore proposed that: **(i)** the council enter into a block contract for the 71 units of in-borough accommodation delivering 60% of the councils need and **(ii)** establish a Framework Agreement for additional SIL placements delivering the remaining 40% of the councils requirement.