



**Havering**  
LONDON BOROUGH

## **CHILDREN AND LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE**

### **4 MARCH 2021**

<b>Subject Heading:</b>	Semi-Independent provision & monitoring arrangements
<b>SLT Lead:</b>	Robert South
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<b>Policy context:</b>	Children Services meeting the needs of Young People
<b>Financial summary:</b>	None arising from this update as this is for information only.

### **The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives**

Communities making Havering	[x]
Places making Havering	[x]
Opportunities making Havering	[]
Connections making Havering	[]

### **SUMMARY**

This report details the management and engagement of providers offering Semi-Independent Living Accommodation in Havering.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are requested to note content of this report.

<b>REPORT DETAIL</b>
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- 1) Whilst the population of children in Havering is increasing, the number of new children becoming looked after has started to decline. The total number of looked after children is not reducing as quickly, however, as children are remaining looked after for longer periods of time.
- 2) Due to preventative work, the number of children coming into care at earlier ages is decreasing whilst the number arriving at 16+ has dramatically increased since 2014/15 – partly as a result of a significant increase in unaccompanied asylum seeking children. This has been putting pressure on service availability and leading to a significant number of older children being placed in semi-independent accommodation. There is a lack of residential and foster provision across London, in particular for teenage children, and it is proving increasingly difficult to place children and young people close to their local area. Costs for residential provision are increasing and often local authorities are competing for the same placements.
- 3) In order to try and keep young people close to home, and in a bid to try and manage costs local authorities are increasingly having to use semi-independent/unregulated provision. Increased pressures on housing stock in local areas has also led to an increase in the number of over 18's remaining in unregulated provision. Havering is not dissimilar to any other London authority finding itself having to use unregulated provision to meet the extended responsibilities.
- 4) The duties placed on LA's also mean that they now have a responsibility for young people whom are care experienced up to their 25<sup>th</sup> Birthday, increasing the number of young people requiring support. Semi-independent provision is not regulated by Ofsted or the CQC, however placing authorities have a responsibility to ensure the appropriateness of the provision and home for the young people being placed. This type of provision is mainly used for young people aged 16 and above. Semi-independent units are staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- 5) The LBH is developing a system that builds quality and assurance in to the services that we commission. However other local authorities also commission semi-independent accommodation. It is possible therefore, that such provisions are set up within Havering without our knowledge and populated with young people from other boroughs. Departments across Havering are working together to address the issues being caused by such provisions as there is no legal requirement for organisations to notify or seek approval from the LA in which they are setting up. The Planning, Licencing, Community Engagement and Joint Commissioning Unit (JCU) are working together to develop a better approach to managing such provisions. LBH teams are currently sharing intelligence to map and identify known provisions.
- 6) The JCU are working closely with the providers who are providing services to the council, and have regular provider forums in order to develop a better understanding of expectations on both sides. Plans are underway to introduce a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) by the beginning of July 2021, allowing better control over provider quality and cost for those young people that Havering places and will in turn negate the need for spot purchasing.
- 7) In addition to the introduction of the DPS we have developed our own semi-independent provision at two properties which belong to the authority. The LA has commissioned a provider to deliver services at the premises and we have total control over all young people placed in these accommodations, unlike provisions which are privately run. The established LA provisions are fully occupied, and the provider has shown that they are able to manage complex young people.
- 8) Staff in the placements team of the JCU carry out regular monitoring visits to commissioned properties, these visits are usually unannounced and a visit checklist is completed. Issues/concerns identified are recorded on an action plan and the provider is expected to respond within set timescales. If, and when a provider does not respond to actions/concerns then the team will take steps to suspend the commissioning of placements with that provider. Monitoring visits have continued virtually throughout Covid.
- 9) We are continuing to review and develop our quality assurance processes and will be introducing improved systems to better help manage and track provider quality assurance. This will also allow us to

develop local intelligence on the quality and breadth of provision in the local area.

- 10) All young people placed in these units who are under 18 ( CLA) have an allocated Social Worker who make regular visits and work in partnership with the staff in the units to ensure good outcomes . Each young person has an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) who reviews the care plan and advocates for the young people to ensure their views and wishes are taken into account. Young people over the age of 18 ( Care Leavers) have a young person's advisor ( YPA) who makes regular visits and works in partnership with staff in the units . Staff visiting young people will report finding to the placements team, and action is taken as appropriate. In addition to the face to face visits, providers are required to send a weekly update to social workers on the young person progress.
- 11) The JCU are working with Local Authorities across North East London to develop protocols to share details of provisions, outcomes of quality assurance visits and any concerns. This will also allow LA's to develop a better understanding of providers operating in the area outside the LA frameworks/DPS, and will also allow for better intelligence gathering of out of borough young people being placed in Havering.
- 12) The Department of Education (DFE) have called for reforms to unregulated provision for children in care and care leavers. A government consultation was launched on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2020 seeking views on proposed new measures to ensure that the use of semi-independent provision provides the right level of support and does not place children in care and care leavers at risk.
- 13) As there is a national push to bring in these reforms, it is vital to ensure the local authority can demonstrate that young people are placed in the most appropriate placements, which can achieve positive outcomes towards independence.

## **IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

***There is a corporate requirement to set out the implications and risks of the decision sought, in the following areas***

**Financial implications and risks:**

There are no direct Financial Implications arising from this report as it is for information only.

The Government consultation referred to in paragraph 12 is still ongoing with no completion date as yet.

The introduction of additional regulation would be likely to result in increased costs, which would be considered in due course.

**Legal implications and risks:**

There are no apparent legal implications in noting the content of the Report.

The Authority has a duty to ensure that it safeguards the welfare of the children and young people in its care, and so far as reasonably practicable, places them close to home.

**Human Resources implications and risks:**

The recommendations made in this report do not give rise to any identifiable HR risks or implications that would affect either the Council or its workforce.

**Equalities implications and risks:**

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to:

(i) The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;

(ii) The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;

(iii) Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

Note: 'Protected characteristics' are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex/gender, and sexual orientation.

The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.